

# JUDAISM

AMBASSADOR UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

JAN 18 1995

PO Box 111  
Big Sandy, TX 75755

An Anatomy of Black Anti-Semitism

*Stephen J. Whitfield*

Jews and Multiculturalism in America

*Michael Galchinsky*

The Symbolism of the *Sukkah*

*Jeffrey L. Rubenstein*

R. B. Kitaj and the Subject of His Paintings

*Clive Sinclair*

Sarah's Silence: Genesis 22 by Rashi's Sister

*Dvora Yanow*

Germany's Vanishing Holocaust Monuments

*James E. Young*

Paul Celan's Jerusalem Poems

*John Felstiner*

Jolson, the Jazz Singer and the Jewish Mother

*Irv Saposnik*

Poetry by Bernhard Frank and Leora Smith

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

ISSUE No. 172 / VOLUME 43 / NUMBER 4 / \$6.00 **FALL 1994**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## STATEMENT OF SPONSORSHIP

The American Jewish Congress is sponsoring JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF JEWISH LIFE AND THOUGHT as part of its basic policy to stimulate an informed awareness of Jewish affairs, encourage Jewish scholarship and adequate opportunities for Jewish education, and generally foster the affirmation of Jewish religious, cultural, and historic identity.

JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral, and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society.

Views and opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Editors or the American Jewish Congress.

## NOTICE TO AUTHORS

Articles, communications, comments and discussion are welcomed. Please send them to Professor Murray Baumgarten, Editor, JUDAISM, Kresge College, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064, on disk in either IBM or Macintosh format, preferably in Microsoft Word, with accompanying hard copy. Unsolicited contributions will be returned only if accompanied by appropriate postage. Upon acceptance by the editors, all copyright in and to such manuscripts will rest with JUDAISM, and authors agree that JUDAISM may copyright such articles in its own name. JUDAISM will publish only original articles which have not previously appeared elsewhere.

Material appearing in the pages of JUDAISM (except for brief passages cited for discussion) may not be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the Editors.

Articles published in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, *The Index of Jewish Periodicals*, *Humanities Index*, *Academic Index*, *Social Sciences Citation Index*, *General Periodicals on Disk*, and *Periodical Abstracts*.

JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL is published by the American Jewish Congress. It appears four times a year, in January, April, July, and October. Office of Publication: 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Re-entered as second-class matter at Post Office, New York City, N.Y. 10028-0458. POSTMASTER: send address changes to JUDAISM, 15 East 84th Street, New York, NY 10028-0458.

	U.S.	Subscription Rates Canada and Foreign	Institutions/Libraries
1 year	\$20	\$22	\$35
2 years	36	40	65
3 years	50	56	90
* Student	10	12	—

Single copies: for individuals, \$6.00; for institutions/libraries, \$10.00.

\* Orders and requests must be accompanied by valid, current student I.D.

All payments for subscriptions and mailings, whether in or outside the United States, must be paid for in American dollars and drawn on an American bank. Make checks payable to the order of JUDAISM, and send to 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028-0458.

Newsstand distribution in the United States by Bernhard DeBoer, Inc., 113 East Centre St., Nutley, N.J. 07011, Fine Print Distributors, 6448 Highway 290 East, Austin, TX 78723-1038, and Ubiquity Distributors, 607 Degraw St., Brooklyn, NY 11217.

US ISSN 0022-5762

Copyright © 1994 by the American Jewish Congress.

Camera-ready copy: Zoe Sodja, University of California, Santa Cruz.

Hebrew text: Gildas Hamel, University of California, Santa Cruz.

# JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

*Issue No. 172 / Volume 43 / Number 4 / Fall 1994*

<i>From the Editor</i>	MURRAY BAUMGARTEN	339
<i>An Anatomy of Black Anti-Semitism</i>	STEPHEN J. WHITFIELD	341
<i>Glimpsing Golus in the Golden Land: Jews and Multiculturalism in America</i>	MICHAEL GALCHINSKY	360
<i>Elegy for My Father's Generation (Poem)</i>	BERNHARD FRANK	369
<i>The Symbolism of the Sukkah</i>	JEFFREY L. RUBENSTEIN	371
<i>The Jews Are My Tahiti: R. B. Kitaj and the Subject of His Paintings An Interview with Commentary</i>	CLIVE SINCLAIR	388
<i>Sarah's Silence: A Newly Discovered Commentary on Genesis 22 by Rashi's Sister</i>	DVORA YANOW	398
<i>Ma Oz? (Poem)</i>		
<i>Mother Tongue (Poem)</i>		
<i>The Cycle of Names (Poem)</i>	LEORA SMITH	409
<i>Germany's Vanishing Holocaust Monuments</i>	JAMES E. YOUNG	412
<i>Translation as Reversion: Paul Celan's Jerusalem Poems</i>	JOHN FELSTINER	419
<i>Jolson, the Jazz Singer and the Jewish Mother: or How My Yiddishe Momme Became My Mammy</i>	IRV SAPOSNIK	432
INDEX TO VOLUME 43		443

AMBASSADOR UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

PO Box 111  
Big Sandy, TX 75755

*Editor*

MURRAY BAUMGARTEN

University of California, Santa Cruz, California

*Contributing Editors*

EDWARD ALEXANDER, Seattle, Washington • ARNOLD J. BAND, Los Angeles, California  
• EUGENE B. BOROWITZ, New York, New York • WILLIAM M. BRINNER, Berkeley,  
California • SCOTT DAVID NOAM COOK, San Jose, California • EMIL L. FACKENHEIM,  
Jerusalem, Israel • MICHAEL FISHBANE, Chicago, Illinois • DAVID FLUSSER, Jerusalem,  
Israel • MARVIN FOX, Waltham, Massachusetts • MAURICE FRIEDMAN, San Diego,  
California • JUDAH GOLDIN, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • JEFFREY S. GUROCK, New  
York, New York • SUSAN HANDELMAN, College Park, Maryland • MENAHEM HARAN,  
Jerusalem, Israel • RICHARD D. HECHT, Santa Barbara, California • ARTHUR HYMAN,  
New York, New York • ERICH ISAAC, Irvington, New York • MILTON R. KONVITZ,  
Oakhurst, New Jersey • ARTHUR J. LELYVELD, Cleveland, Ohio • ANNE L. LERNER, New  
York, New York • SOL LIPTZIN, Jerusalem, Israel • EMANUEL RACKMAN, New York,  
New York • ZALMAN M. SCHACHTER, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • CLIVE SINCLAIR, St.  
Albans, England • DAVID WOLF SILVERMAN, Oakhurst, New Jersey • SHEMARYAHU  
TALMON, Jerusalem, Israel • DAVID WEISS, New York, New York • PAUL WEISS,  
Washington, DC • STEPHEN J. WHITFIELD, Waltham, Massachusetts • HANA WIRTH-  
NESHER, Tel Aviv, Israel • MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD, New York, New York •  
DVORA YANOW, San Jose, California • JAMES E. YOUNG, Amherst, Massachusetts

\* \* \* \* \*

The American Jewish Congress, publishers of JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF JEWISH THOUGHT, is pleased to announce the appointment of Murray Baumgarten as the new editor of the journal. Dr. Baumgarten is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and the author of many publications, including *City Scriptures: Modern Jewish Writing* (Harvard University Press, 1982). A distinguished scholar and writer, he follows in a notable succession of editors who have made JUDAISM the outstanding journal of its kind. We welcome his assumption of the editorship and are certain that he will make his own distinctive contribution to the journal.

AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

David V. Kahn, President

Phil Baum, Executive Director

***From the Editor:***

Colleagues and friends with whom I have been talking about JUDAISM have reminded me of the revived interest in matters Jewish evident throughout the country. We have differed upon occasion about what it means and how best to explore its ramifications, as well as the right ways to second it. The common ground we share is a commitment to an intellectual endeavor that promises to address our concerns as Jews and citizens. We join in the shared understanding that without the latter we cannot fully be the former. But how to dance at two weddings? That, the Yiddish proverb reminds us, is an experiential and a political problem—and yet that is what we Jews have been doing at least since the beginning of the modern era.

My introduction to its possibilities came in 1938 when I was born on a ship sailing via Rotterdam and Curaçao to Panama. We were fleeing Vienna, Eichmann, Hitler, and *Anschluss*. Drawing from the past to create a future in spite of the efforts of these modern-day Amalekites, my parents joined with their refugee friends to build a synagogue and community center in Colon. They were encouraged by the already established Sephardic Jewish community in Panama City, whose members had arrived in the 1920s, many as refugees, from Aleppo. When I was five, an itinerant *melamed* arrived from Cuba, and the small Ashkenazi community gathered its children into a class so that they might be united not only by the common experience of escape, rescue, and refuge but the ongoing conversation, the *nigun* and *nusach* of Jewish learning. We were not, it seems to be, the victims of the past after all but the soldiers of a new, perhaps more hopeful, Jewish and modern history. All this we began with Hebrew.

In that bare room in the Centro Israelita Cultural, whose windows welcomed the breezes of the Caribbean, we journeyed across millennia. To encounter the conversation initiated by Abraham in his discussions with God, to discover Hannah's prayer, David's psalms, and the call of the prophets was to be initiated into new dimensions of experience—it was to uncover a heritage and recover a place in the human family. Even then and in that place this conversation of dialogue, rabbinic dialectic, liturgical, philosophical, and artistic expression was not a private but a communal matter—part of my generation's re-inscription in traditions that bind together the Jewish people across continents and generations. It is also part of the Jewish effort to articulate the responsibilities and opportunities of citizenship in the modern world.

My colleagues also remind me that our current revival has foregrounded the effort to join and reconfigure what has been separate. The impulse to bring together the concerns we have as Jews and as citizens continues in the new generation, and is among the important subjects being raised by contemporary voices within this ancient Jewish conversation. As the editor of JUDAISM, working from an established format, I hope to advance a process by which this journal can serve as a bridge to a younger generation uncertain how to connect to the past in defining a twenty-first century Jewish future.

I thus anticipate that these pages will include discussions of the problems of Jewish study and Jewish life on our campuses; of the new

interest in Yiddish; the rethinking of attitudes to the Jewish past, be it in Russia, Europe, Australia, America, or the many lands of Sepharad; of the reshaping of Zionism and its repositioning in a changing political landscape; the personal impact of these responses to the contemporary crisis of belief, identity, and place; of what suburbanization has done to the vital intersections and multicultural interactions of American Jewish city life.

In this situation it would be inappropriate to ignore the work of translation of important, often rediscovered, texts that flourishes today. Similarly, these pages need to be open to the striking and original midrashim, fine poetry, and important fiction, written in many languages, that participate in the religious, moral, and philosophical discussion and exposition of the current stream of Jewish conversation. And articles on classical Jewish texts, themes, and rites will continue to center and punctuate these pages.

As the essays in this issue will attest, I expect to welcome previously unheard voices and engage issues sidelined by more pressing concerns, as part of the affirmation and elaboration of the continuing power of Jewish learning. Whatever the subject under discussion, these pages will be open to time-honored modes and newer methods of analysis and scholarship. My intent is to bring the insights and habits of scholarly inquiry to bear on current areas of concern. My aim is to make JUDAISM not only informative but evocative and even provocative—informed by technique but not technical in orientation. Though engaging political issues, it will not strive for the provocations of political posturing. Rather, engaging issues through exploration and analysis of the reasons and purposes informing choices, including political ones, it will articulate the complex values of Jewish cultural study. For Judaism is not only conversation but practice—and a community practicing in, by, and through its conversation—thus shaping our discourse and thereby our future.

I am honored to take part in this ongoing conversation. As editor I owe a great deal to the work and achievement of my predecessors. To Dr. Robert Gordis, the founding editor, his successors Rabbi Felix Levy and Dr. Steven Schwarzschild—*zekher tzadikim livrakha*—and Dr. Ruth B. Waxman, for over twenty years the journal's devoted managing editor, as well as the indispensable Maier Deshell, I extend heartfelt thanks. It is my privilege to carry on their work. They challenge all of us to continue to make JUDAISM part of the ongoing dialogue and communal binding of families and generations.

I also want to thank the Santa Cruz campus of the University of California for providing the assistance making it possible for me to edit the journal here in California, though it continues to be published in New York by the American Jewish Congress. Perhaps this too is another indication of the changing possibilities wrought by modern technology and responsive dynamic institutions.

I hope the pages of JUDAISM—small like that Caribbean room but opening onto surprising vistas—will partake of the power of that saving conversation. I invite you to join me in its workings—as readers, writers, and participants.

Murray Baumgarten, Santa Cruz, California, Hanukkah 5755



# *An Anatomy of Black Anti-Semitism*

STEPHEN J. WHITFIELD

IN AN UNUSUAL GESTURE, THE RADICAL JOURNALIST I. F. Stone invoked solidarity with American Jews when he advised this segment of his readership in 1968 “to swallow a few insults from overwrought blacks” who were espousing anti-Semitism. He recommended that such demagogues be treated with indulgence, as a passing phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> Since then all the evidence leads to one conclusion: however vigorously a policy of salutary neglect was pursued, black anti-Semitism is not ephemeral. This particular version of the oldest of group libels, this latest installment in the tradition of malicious and irrational falsehoods against the Jewish people, has not been driven underground. It has persisted; in part of the African-American community it has even flourished. Its purveyors are not treated as cranks whose rantings do not extend beyond a corner of Hyde Park; instead they are invited to speak on university campuses and to present their views on national television programs. They are not invisible men. They do not dominate the African-American community, but they are not exactly unpopular either.

Though American Jewish groups are understandably concerned with why such prejudice has persisted (and how it might be resisted), they themselves have not been left alone in confronting the issue. Though varying in forthrightness, leading African-American intellectuals and academics have acknowledged and condemned this species of bigotry within their own community—most notably, the ubiquitous Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the equally voluble Cornel West, as well as Roger Wilkins, Bob Herbert, and others. These recent criticisms reinforce the sense of *déjà vu* all over again, since the topic of black anti-Semitism is about a generation old. The signposts have included anthologies edited by Shlomo Katz and by Nat Hentoff, whose contributors were mostly Jews; and Amira Baraka’s repudiation of his own anti-Semitism.<sup>2</sup> The works of scholars and journalists like Hasia Diner, Robert Weisbord and Arthur Stein, and Jonathan Kaufman—themselves all Jewish—have also analyzed the phenomenon within a broader framework of relations between the two minorities.

---

STEVEN J. WHITFIELD *holds the Max Richter Chair in American Civilization at Brandeis. Among his books are* Voices of Jacob, Hands of Esau: Jews in American Life and Thought; American Space, Jewish Time; *and* A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till.

If the focus of this paper is exclusively on black anti-Semitism, the excuse is not only ontological (the limitations of space and time). Nor is it not out of denial that racism exists in the Jewish community. But a concentration on black anti-Semitism would be misplaced if something symmetrical could be observed in organized Jewish life. I am confident that this is not the case, that there is none of the ideological hostility to blacks that is equivalent to what emanates from part of African-Americans against Jews. This essay is therefore preoccupied with anti-Semitism because some African-Americans are preoccupied with spreading it. I also believe that black anti-Semitism can be treated in isolation because it *is* an isolated phenomenon. Its virulence is unmatched; its intensity has no analog in American society. Black anti-Semitism is so singular that it demands distinctive and emphatic focus.

Four illustrations are familiar enough to require little elaboration:

- 1) In 1988 Steve Cokely, coordinator for special projects for the mayor of Chicago, publicly charged that Jewish doctors were deliberately infecting black infants with the AIDS virus. Herbert Martin, the African-American minister who then chaired the city's Commission on Human Relations, acknowledged that this grotesque slander had "a ring of truth"; and Mayor Eugene Sawyer's own reaction was sluggish. It took him nearly a week to fire Cokely, whose lay diagnosis of the epidemic apparently did not disqualify him from being invited to speak at the University of Michigan.<sup>3</sup>
- 2) In Albany in the summer of 1991, Leonard Jeffries, an expert on the Afrocentric curriculum who was serving as chairperson of the Africana Studies Department at the City College of New York, noted the collusion of Hollywood Jews and their "financial partners, the Mafia," in controlling "a financial system of destruction of black people." He spoke of "a conspiracy, planned and plotted and programmed out of Hollywood," orchestrated by "people called Greenberg and Weisberg and Trigliani." The director of the African-American Institute at SUNY-Albany did not repudiate Jeffries' remarks but instead blamed the newspaper that reported them for "race-baiting."<sup>4</sup>
- 3) Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam extolled the greatness of Hitler, trashed Judaism as a "gutter religion," and was so consistently biased in his opinions of Jews that the Anti-Defamation League could devote three pamphlets quoting from similar remarks reported in the press. Having invited Arthur Butz of Northwestern University to address a Nation of Islam rally, Farrakhan has also been tangentially associated with those "revisionists" who deny that the Holocaust ever occurred. That posi-



tion contradicted the views of his own "National Assistant," Khalid Muhammad, who not only acknowledged its occurrence but, in a speech at Kean College in the fall of 1993, blamed the Jews themselves for inspiring genocide.<sup>5</sup>

- 4) In that same speech, Muhammad did not confine himself to the perfidy of Jews. He also broke with the official policy of the African National Congress in urging all whites to leave South Africa. Otherwise "we kill the women, we kill the children, we kill the babies. We kill the blind, we kill the crippled, [inaudible] we kill 'em all. We kill the faggot, we kill the lesbian, we kill them all," adding: "Goddammit, and when you get through killing 'em all, go to the goddam graveyard and dig up the grave and kill 'em, goddam, again. 'Cause they didn't die hard enough." Control of the White House, the media, the economy and "many of our [black] politicians" was ascribed to the epitome of evil, depicted in a February 19 speech in Baltimore as "that old no-good Jew, that old imposter Jew, that old hooknose, bagel-eating, lox-eating . . . so-called damn Jew."<sup>6</sup>

The freakish character of such malevolence deserves underscoring. Critics of such anti-Semitism have trouble finding any equivalent to such vitriol within the Jewish community, any provocation to such rancor. The best that a contributor to *The New Yorker* could discover was "the case of the Jewish comedian Jackie Mason, who managed to make slurs sound funny." (The mayoral candidate for whom Mason was campaigning in New York City was not amused, and forthrightly disavowed him for using a demeaning Yiddish term to depict incumbent David Dinkins.)<sup>7</sup> Yet such hostility is concentrated upon American Jews, who are unique in being so unashamedly targeted for such spite in a polyglot society that has striven to stigmatize the public expression of bigotry.

To any historian committed to the ideal of democratic pluralism, such a focus upon Jewish infamy is remarkable. I do not subscribe to the notion of collective guilt, to the habit of blaming groups for the crimes of ancestors. The accusation of deicide, for example, has inflicted terrible consequences upon the Jews of the Diaspora; an echo of such reasoning can be detected in 1917 in Secretary of State Robert Lansing's opposition to Zionism, for he shared the widespread Christian "resent[ment of] turning the Holy Land over to the absolute control of the race credited with the death of Christ." With Vatican II, the statute of limitations expired on that charge in 1965. But while it would be natural for African-Americans to look back in anger on all the trouble they've seen, all the unrequited toil and terrible injustice that permeate their past, it is puzzling and perverse to convert contemporary Jews into scapegoats. From 1619 on, African-Americans have suffered most grievously at the hands of Southern whites;

and yet it is noteworthy how little ire or even attention is drawn toward them. The rhetoric of African-American nationalism incorporates few slurs, few if any reminders of the shoot-on-sight violence that disfigured the Southern past, few pay-back adumbrations of primordial animosity visited upon the descendants of those who voted for the likes of Vardaman, Bilbo, Blease, and Rankin, or even those who themselves elected Faubus, Eastland, Talmadge, or Helms. George Wallace ("I say, Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!") happened to have won less than 1 percent of the Jewish vote in his 1968 Presidential campaign. But he won a 1986 poll among African-Americans in Alabama as the finest governor in the state's history.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the region's whites have redeemed themselves, and have made impressive strides in "overcoming the past." But is such *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* enough to account for why, after centuries of slavery, Jim Crow, lynchings and other horrors, American Jews should be stuck with the bill?

The African-Americans who moved North often came into conflict with various immigrant groups; and when such encounters produced ugly violence, they were usually the victims. Recall a couple of scenes from James T. Farrell's Chicago *Bildungsroman*, starting with Red Kelly's warning to his friends: "You know, boys, the goddamn shines are getting too frisky coming around here." He adds that "a decent girl can't walk alone here any more for fear a nigger might rape her. They ruin the park. When they come over here, you need a gas-mask if you want to stick around. . . . The Polacks and Dagoes and niggers are the same, only the niggers are the lowest. That's why I say we ought to get the boys together some night and clean every nigger out of the park. . . . If we do it once, they won't come back. We can get a few billies and clubs, and if they try to use razors, make them just wish they hadn't." Then, in an episode based on the 1919 race riots, Farrell discloses how remote was the distance from alabaster cities that gleam, undimmed by human tears, as one "gang of bloodthirsty kids" taunt another to "'Let's go!' Clubs and sticks were brandished. Three Star Hennessey gritted his teeth, and slashed the air with a straight razor. Weary Reilley casually and publicly examined a .22 revolver. Kenny Kilarney put on a pair of brass knuckles. . . . Studs Lonigan gripped a baseball bat, and . . . said that when he cracked a dinge in the head, the goddamn eight ball would think it had been Ty Cobb slamming out a homer off Walter Johnson. . . . Tommy Doyle said the niggers were never going to forget the month of July, 1919. Studs said that they ought to hang every nigger in the city to the telephone poles, and let them swing there in the breeze. Benny Taite said that for every white man killed in the riots, ten black apes ought to be massacred. . . ." When the gang gets to Wabash Avenue and State Street, "the streets were like avenues of the dead."<sup>9</sup> This terrifying scene has no equivalent in American Jewish fiction,

because no such episode has occurred in American Jewish history. Yet there is little evidence of African-American rage directed at, say, Irish-Americans.

Finally, consider the utter absorption with the group that African-American anti-Semites have identified as the culprit behind what Melville termed “man’s foulest crime.”<sup>10</sup> In February on *The Arsenio Hall Show*, Farrakhan was permitted to plug a volume entitled *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* (1991), a farrago of lies, misrepresentations, and factoids that obsessively and misleadingly blames Jewry for the system of antebellum bondage. Of course some Jews owned slaves. So did far, far more numerous church-going Southern whites; so did some free Southern blacks; so did some Native Americans; and of course, Africans had enslaved one another. But the work of phony scholarship that Farrakhan was permitted to pitch, without contradiction, does not dwell on such widespread ownership of other human beings. A book about the “secret relationship” between blacks and Native American tribes would not get the juices flowing; only Jewish-American turpitude, it would appear, can activate such passions, and so *The Secret Relationship* highlights the tiny fraction of the Old South’s slaveholding Jews—which Farrakhan inflated up to 75 percent. Asked about that preposterous figure, the NAACP’s director of communications, whose distant predecessor had been the scholarly W. E. B. DuBois, admitted that the Minister “may have exaggerated the historical fact”; but such a percentage was “a matter for academics to debate.” Historians did not bother to refute such propaganda, though the Anti-Defamation League defended the honor (at the very least) of the “two-thirds of the .5 percent of America’s population that was Jewish [which] arrived in this country during the final dozen or so years of the slave era.” Questions were obvious: “How can the authors [of *The Secret Relationship*] continually refer to ‘the Jews’ as a monolith, when the vast majority of Jewish Americans in 1860 neither owned slaves nor lived in slave states? How could the 50,000 ‘indigenous’ Jews who lived in America prior to 1850, or the few hundred families among them known to have owned slaves, have been responsible for the importation of millions of slaves? And what, aside from their ethnicity, is so different about these Jewish slave owners from the rest of the slave-owning population that their activities merit a separate ‘historical’ analysis?”<sup>11</sup>

The Nation of Islam also ignores Islam. Though centuries ahead of Europeans in the African slave trade and the last to abandon it, Arabs have usually been exempted from the accusations of collective guilt in which African-American nationalists have indulged. The omission is striking. At Versailles in 1919, at the very moment when the peacemakers were wrestling with, among other challenges, the first Pan-African Congress, the British promise of a Jewish homeland, and the minority rights treaties

(championed by an early civil rights attorney, Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee), Prince Feisal represented Arab interests. The photograph of him surrounded by his retinue includes his African slave. Having emerged from the house of bondage, some African-Americans have found their way to the House of Saud, which even snookered so street-wise and wary a character as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz into ignoring the tardiness with which slavery was abolished in Saudi Arabia (by royal decree in 1962).<sup>12</sup> Never tiring of chastising white America for the system of slavery abolished a century earlier, Malcolm X could not bring himself to criticize a kingdom that had abolished slavery only two years earlier. Though the exiled Eldridge Cleaver claimed to have seen black slaves in Algeria, and condemned Arabs as among "the most racist people on earth,"<sup>13</sup> African-American nationalists have not made it clear why, according to the fashions of moral accounting, the historic responsibility of Arabs for African slavery is wiped off the books. Perhaps it is a "black thing," and others wouldn't understand. But the inference is irresistible that the current brand of black anti-Semitism is not free-floating; it is focused. It attacks Jews not because they are whites but because they are Jews, while ignoring "Bubba" and virtually everyone else—even those whose own ancestors' persecution of African-Americans was barbaric. Such Jew-hatred is therefore not a surrogate for a diffused hatred of whites, as James Baldwin had argued.<sup>14</sup> "Mr. Goldberg" is not an interchangeable symbol for "Mr. Charlie." Its purveyors are not anti-Semites because they are bigots; rather, they are bigots because they are anti-Semites.

A second feature of this enduring phenomenon is its coarseness. Vulgar and primitive in its attribution of a diabolical cunning that seems limitless, it is not content with slurs, or with derogatory remarks. It raises the stakes of falsehood in a way that depends upon sheer credulity, indistinguishable from superstition, and reflecting a premodern, antiscientific mentality in which accepted standards of proof or disproof no longer operate. Such anti-Semitism taps the most absurd myths and irrational beliefs, the preposterous fears associated with the Middle Ages, when the poisoning of wells, the spreading of plagues, the murdering of Christian children (so that their blood could be baked with matza) get updated, for example, in Cokely's charges of a Jewish doctors' plot. Such anti-Semitism cannot be countered either with common sense or with empirical evidence, though the decline of such standards is part of a larger problem: public education has become so ineffectual that only about half the American populace realizes that the earth revolves around the sun; over forty percent of the citizenry still inhabits a pre-Copernican universe.

Hollywood cinema can, for example, be analyzed in terms of its likely effects upon popular consciousness, and the biases and negative stereotypes

that historically and currently are conveyed through movies and other forms of mass communication can be located. The bibliography is rich, thanks to scholars in fields like African-American studies, ethnic studies, American studies, and communications. But scholarship is not what Jeffries presented. His speech at the Empire State Black Arts Festival was no contribution to the topic but instead a conspiracy theory that ascribes wickedness to Jews (not as individuals, not a category confined to movie producers, not a category enlarged to include moviemakers who are not Jewish). The disproportionate role of Jews in Hollywood does not prove that they acted in a cohesive fashion, or that they acted primarily as Jews rather than as businessmen—or even that they allowed their ethnic origins to influence their movies in a particularistic way. When Steven Spielberg tried “to find movies to help inspire me to make *Schindler’s List*,” he told an interviewer, “I couldn’t find any.” The moguls repudiated any distinctive Jewish culture and “chose being American with fierce determination. And all I can say is that it’s reflected in their choice of movies they didn’t make.”<sup>15</sup> But such nuances matter little to the lurid and feverish concoctions of contemporary black anti-Semitism.

In the published excerpts of Muhammad’s speech at Kean College, American Jews are not accused of any particular acts harmful to African-Americans, or even held accountable for any notably racist attitudes. He mentions no organization that purports to represent the Jewish community, and curiously enough only one individual: Harry Oppenheimer (a convert to Anglicanism whose father, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, had converted to Catholicism). If Jewry is to be judged by the individuals it produces, why not mention William Moses Kunstler, counsel for numerous civil rights groups and the criminal defense attorney who represented the defendants in the World Trade Center bombing, as well as El Sayyid A. Nosair, charged with assassinating Meir Kahane in 1990? Kunstler’s early association with the Committee on Social Action of the American Jewish Congress tied him far closer to the Jewish world than Oppenheimer—but factual rebuttal can gain little traction against an ideological vision.

That *Weltanschauung* is an instance of “the paranoid style,” in which the operations of history do not merely include episodic conspiracies. Instead “history is a conspiracy, set in motion by demonic forces,” in Richard Hofstadter’s formulation<sup>16</sup>; and this sensibility is commonplace enough to inspire a satiric bumper sticker: “Humpty Dumpty Was Pushed.” The demonic forces can be quite specific, however. As early as the fourteenth century, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, both Wyclif and Chaucer were using the term “conspire” to refer to the Jews. Whatever sins and crimes they are supposed to have committed typify the group—though their accusers expend little effort to show the communal purpo-

siveness of, say, even American Jews, or whether its source is ethnic or religious rather than some other motive. The conspiratorial imagination does not accept the historical record as a repository of contingencies and accidents; and within it Jews do not act except as members of a shadowy, string-pulling collectivity. What John Hay said of his “clean daft” and “wild” friend Henry Adams, for whom “the Jews are all the press, all the cabinets, all the gods and weather,”<sup>17</sup> could easily be fast-forwarded alongside Jeffries and Muhammad’s speeches, the most recent manifestations of the negative stereotyping that has been embedded in Christendom for centuries.

They can be read as continuous with the entire tradition of Western anti-Semitism, with its long association—sustained over the past century by monetary cranks—of the Jews with lucre: “You call yourself Mr. Reubenstein, Mr. Goldstein, Mr. Silverstein. Because you been stealing rubies and gold and silver all over the earth. That’s why we can’t even wear a ring or a bracelet or a necklace without calling it Jew-elry. . . . We found out that the Federal Reserve ain’t really owned by the Federal Government. . . . It’s owned by the Jews,” who also fiendishly exercise control of the media, including “the textbooks . . . the libraries. Liebraries. NBC, ABC, CBS, you don’t see nothin’, or makes sure we don’t see. Warner Brothers, Paramount, huh? Hollywood, period. . . . [They] are also the most influential in newspaper, magazine, print media and electronic media. . . . They have our entertainers in their hip pocket.” Such power, exercised through disproportionate wealth and corruption of the sources of discourse, is supposed to have modern society itself in its grip, as though a sinister cabal were in charge. “I don’t care who sits in the seat at the White House,” Muhammad added. “You can believe that the Jews control that seat that they sit in from behind the scenes. They control the finance, and not only that, they influence the policy-making.” A fantasy of all-encompassing Jewish evil thus sustains an invocation to Fight the Power—and ignores the disorganized condition of organized American Jewry. (Those aspiring to lead so diffuse and fragmented a group are advised not to be “control freaks.” In 1921, while Lithuanian-Americans had thirteen national organizations, Finnish-Americans eleven, German-Americans eight and Italian-Americans two, the Jews had already formed eighty-six.)<sup>18</sup>

One source of paranoid inspiration may be *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a notorious forgery that the Czarist police concocted a century ago, an utter fabrication that influenced Adolf Hitler. When an African-American student magazine at UCLA, *Nommo*, printed an article that claimed some validity to the *Protocols*, African-American faculty members refused to comment; one of them privately explained that students already considered them “insufficiently militant” and did not wish to widen the gap. Though the



*Protocols* can easily be found in Arab bookstores (which have sold an estimated sixty Arabic editions) and influenced President Nasser of Egypt, this work has been discredited in the United States since the 1920s—except in the most feral anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi circles and apparently among some African-American nationalists.<sup>19</sup> Try to imagine an equivalent. Protestant clubs on campuses do not have tables for anti-Catholic forgeries like Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* (1836) and its *Further Disclosures* (1837). (Three-hundred thousand copies of these tracts had been sold by the outset of the Civil War, helping to instigate nativist and "Know Nothing" passions during the most violent anti-Catholic period in American history.)<sup>20</sup> When the Newman Club or the Wesley Foundation meets on campus, pamphlets that blame the perfidious Jews for deicide are not disseminated. When clubs that may be predominantly white hold meetings on campuses, they do not provide videocassettes of *The Birth of a Nation* (which is, in any event, an original work of cinematic art—and therefore, despite its racism, not comparable to the *Protocols*). Nor do white fraternities at Ole Miss distribute Bilbo's 1947 opus, *Take Your Choice—Segregation or Mongrelization*, which at least faithfully represents the Senator's views—unlike the *Protocols*, a fiction masquerading as fact, reporting the aims of a cabal that never existed.

The attraction of that Czarist forgery reinforces the glum generalization that black anti-Semitism is notable as well for its status on the campus, presumably the launching pad of future communal leaders. Some of the Talented Tenth love it when Nation of Islam spokesmen talk dirty, and make Black History Month a forum for outbursts of abuse (legitimated in the guise of pleas for "diversity" and student autonomy). Nat Hentoff has reported "a strong strain of anti-Semitism among some—not all, by any means—black students," many of whom had not been born when Stone was advising patience with "overwrought" demagogues. Not exactly rabble-rousers, they appeal not only (or not primarily) to ill-educated masses but to those "young, gifted, and black," who invite such speakers with metronomic regularity,<sup>21</sup> and without disclaimers that their anti-Semitism is deplorable. Such speakers are sometimes cheered not *despite* their anti-Semitism but *because* of it. Asked whether undergraduates inviting Farrakhan were making an anti-Semitic gesture, Alvin Poussaint of Harvard Medical School replied: "Not necessarily."<sup>22</sup> After Muhammad spoke during Black History Month at Kent State, an associate professor of education denied that the 1,650 persons in attendance had heard any negative stereotypes. "There's an assumption that when he said 'Jews are bloodsuckers' he meant all Jews," Anita Jackson opined. "He clarified during his speech here that he meant only those people who set up their shops, charge higher prices, and then leave the

neighborhoods with the money. That's what the students agree with." A Howard University group called Unity Nation not only brought Muhammad, Jeffries, and other proponents of a Jewish conspiracy to the campus, but also caused officials to cancel (or at least postpone) a lecture on the Haitian slave insurrection by David Brion Davis, Sterling Professor of History at Yale, a convert to Judaism and an authority not only on slavery but on conspiracy. The atmosphere was deemed too "volatile."<sup>23</sup>

The singularity of this phenomenon again needs to be noticed. Though the contemporary campus is so sensitive to articulated prejudice that undergraduates can be threatened with administrative punishment for calling loud African-American students "water buffaloes" (not a racial epithet) and for laughing at a joke about homosexuals,<sup>24</sup> invective directed against American Jews—if perpetrated by African-Americans—seems immunized against the charge of prejudice. At Kean State a campus project has been training faculty members and administrators to reduce prejudice among their students. Its codirector was asked whether Muhammad's speech at Kean State typified the prejudice that the project was combating. Refusing comment, Lois C. Richardson typified instead the point of deconstruction: "Our students are astute enough to make decisions about opinions they hear. We can't tell our students what to think."<sup>25</sup> It should be added that few, if any, incidents of anti-Semitism among other "students of color" (Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans) have been reported, just as Jeffries' anti-Semitism has no counterpart in the United States among, say, chairpersons of Ukrainian Studies or Polish Studies programs. The acceptability of anti-Semitism among African-Americans pursuing the higher learning in America may still be too novel for Jewish defense agencies to figure out how to address, since racial and religious prejudice usually correlates with formal education *and* with age. At least since the 1930s, the more years of schooling Gentiles had, the less likely to be bamboozled; the younger they were, the less likely to harbor negative attitudes about the Jewish people. African-American divergence from this pattern was discerned about when anti-Semitism was vanishing elsewhere.<sup>26</sup>

The mid-1960s marks the caesura. In 1965 even the *American Jewish Yearbook* dropped its listing on anti-Semitism,<sup>27</sup> because whatever little there was to report had become so marginalized. That generalization also applied to the minority then known as Negroes, because until then the evidence of black anti-Semitism was limited, rare, and impressionistic. Perhaps the two most quoted sources were the passing remarks of literary figures. Richard Wright's 1945 autobiography mentions a casual animosity back in Arkansas ("all of us black people who lived in the

neighborhood hated Jews”), that seemed a counterpart to peasant attitudes that Jews had already encountered in *Mitteleuropa*. In that era Southern Jews tended to belong to the mercantile class that “don’t plant taters and don’t plant cotton”; and, to many customers, how these retailers and middlemen prospered was mysterious, and even parasitic (though the main objection, Wright claimed, was deicide). Within three years of *Black Boy*, James Baldwin would note that “just as society must have a scapegoat, so hatred must have a symbol. Georgia has the Negro and Harlem has the Jew.”<sup>28</sup> Of course neither Wright nor Baldwin record such attitudes in any way that suggests approval; they merely report, without trying either to justify or to exculpate anti-Semitism. Oddly enough, Wright’s memory may not even be accurate (since it is so difficult to find corroborating evidence among rural Southern African-Americans). But such attitudes were in any event expressions of private prejudice rather than public discourse, and do not suggest either a general ideological framework, or something transmitted by an elite of “opinion leaders.”

For nearly another two decades thereafter, it would be hard to pick up the work of an African-American author and find anything but good will toward Jews (if they are mentioned at all), whether in Ralph Ellison’s belief that “the United States [is] freer politically and richer culturally because there are Jewish Americans to bring it the benefit of their special forms of dissent, their humor and their gift for ideas,” or in Marian Anderson’s autobiographical description of her visit to Israel, or LeRoi Jones’s 1961 faith that “if perhaps there were more Judeo-Americans and a few less bland, culture-less, middle-headed AMERICANS, this country might still be a great one,” or even more dramatically in Sammy Davis, Jr.’s account of his own acceptance of Judaism.<sup>29</sup> Affirmation and empathy were especially pronounced on the left, whether anti-Communist (Bayard Rustin), pro-Communist (DuBois) or very pro-Communist (Paul Robeson). In 1949, for example, while Stalin’s regime was brutally engaged in extirpating Yiddish culture, Robeson was touring the Soviet Union, and chose to conclude his Moscow concert program with only one encore: a Yiddish song of the Warsaw ghetto resistance. The audience was stunned, tearful, and grateful to its beloved “Pavel Vasilyevich.”<sup>30</sup>

The decomposition of positive attitudes toward Jews came in 1967 with the Six-Day War, which provoked SNCC’s *Newsletter* to condemn Israel for “massacres” inflicted upon the Arab population. Anti-Zionism, barely known until then in the African-American community, dovetailed with the criticism that SNCC’s program director leveled against Jewish rapacity. But SNCC’s office was hardly unique, since Israel’s stunning military victory and occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had the effect of undermining its international support elsewhere. Charles de

Gaule, long a friend of Zionism, did not contradict an opinion that he wafted into a press conference in Paris, labeling the Jews “an elite people, sure of itself and dominating” (a nasty crack despite a quick effort at spin control, in which such attributes were interpreted as qualities which the haughty President *admired*). In New York the ex-president of the Union Theological Seminary was even harsher. “All persons who seek to view the Middle East problem with honesty and objectivity stand aghast at Israel’s onslaught,” Henry P. Van Dusen asserted. This military attack the liberal Protestant theologian condemned as “the most violent, ruthless (and successful) aggression since Hitler’s blitzkrieg . . . aiming not at victory but at annihilation.”<sup>31</sup> In so feverish a context, SNCC’s explicit denunciation of Israel may not have looked especially strange, or even gratuitous; and only in retrospect could it be fathomed that the most militant versions of African-American nationalism and support of the Third World blurred the line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.<sup>32</sup> Identification with the Jewish fate did not entirely evaporate among African-American leftists, but such concern became increasingly rare.

Here the innovator was Malcolm X, who has surely been the most imposing and ambiguous influence in the formation of African-American ideology in the last three decades. He is the first political figure in African-American history who resists classification as a champion of civil rights, which he scorned. Murdered while the civil rights movement was on the cusp of success, he attracted little tangible allegiance among the masses. But the eclipse of the ideal of judging citizens “by the content of their character” instead of “the color of their skin” accelerated the rise of his posthumous impact. His combination of black nationalism and a pro-Third World ideological perspective (initially of course linked with the Nation of Islam) coincided with a bundle of prejudices; like other self-educated people, he tended to generalize too broadly from his own personal experience in the acrimony that he expressed toward women, Christians, the African-American middle class, and whites in general (though he was evolving). Though anti-Semitism was an attitude he disclaimed rather than exulted in, his autobiography is peppered with anti-Jewish remarks; and his legacy has proven volatile in authorizing much of the anti-Semitism in the African-American community. Until Malcolm X, not even any significant African-American nationalist had propagated anti-Semitism (or entwined it with anti-Zionism); in this sort of ideological mobilization, he was the pioneer.

While attitudinal surveys have shown falling mean levels of anti-Semitism among white Gentiles, the mean levels of anti-Semitism among African-Americans has risen since the assassination of Malcolm X; by 1981 the rate was 20 percent higher than among whites.<sup>33</sup> In October 1969 the Prime Minister of Israel paid a state visit that included a stop at the

Milwaukee elementary school that Golda Meir had attended as a child. The pupils serenaded her by singing the Israeli national anthem, "Hatikvah," in Hebrew, even though by then all the pupils in her former school were African-Americans.<sup>34</sup> A quarter of a century later, with Afrocentrism now part of that city's school curriculum, such a visit would have become virtually unimaginable.

Occasionally thrust into the glare of the larger society, black anti-Semites have veered from defiance to casuistry. The headlights of onrushing political traffic sometimes force even Farrakhan to pretend to deny what he is. But one such self-exculpation was bizarre, as when he assured the audience tuned into *The Arsenio Hall Show* that he "never desired to put another human being in an oven."<sup>35</sup> Anything less lethal than genocide is presumably not to be defined as anti-Semitism, which is made synonymous with the Final Solution. Of course, by that logic, neither Senator John C. Calhoun nor even General Nathan Bedford Forrest would pass muster as racists, since neither favored genocide. If racism were equated only with the Nazi policy of extermination, then it might be inferred that those favoring the enslavement or the segregation or the degradation of African-Americans would have been exonerated too. But that is not apparently the reasoning of the Nation of Islam. If it is very easy to be innocent of "anti-Semitism" (not wishing to inflict mass murder is sufficient), it is very hard—for Jews at least—to be exonerated of "racism." When Phil Donahue argued with Khalid Muhammad that the martyrdom of Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman in 1964 proved that not all Jews are racists, Muhammad coolly replied: "O. K.—that's two."<sup>36</sup> In the setting in which the guest whom Donahue booked habitually operates, hostility to Jews is unapologetic and spiteful. Unlike the public stance of Islam, which professes only to be anti-Zionist, black anti-Semitism feels little obligation to deny its animus, which—far from being shameful—*adds* to its interest and appeal. Its proponents are protected under the First Amendment, though in violation of the Clean Air Act (befouling an atmosphere in which the Jewish people are downwind). They enjoy the sort of publicity that must arouse the envy of, say, the leadership of the Urban League, and have been getting the exposure that an already violent society sees no reason to withdraw.

Though a pogrom occurred in 1991 in Crown Heights, New York, where the lynch mob was African-American and its innocent victim, Yankel Rosenbaum, was murdered because he was Jewish, it cannot (yet) be claimed that black anti-Semitism poses a physical danger to Jews. The significance of the phenomenon lies rather in its inclusion in the voice of African America (and in its revelation of what some communal leaders and intellectuals define as civility). It also reveals how much the standards of democratic pluralism have been devalued, and how little some African-

American citizens appreciate the political apothegm of the historian Marvin Meyers: "With talk begins responsibility."<sup>37</sup>

In the shadow of the ideological struggle against fascism and Nazism over half a century ago, the rule became operational that responsible talk would exclude appeals to ethnic and religious prejudice and—later and much more erratically—racial prejudice as well. Take Richard Nixon, for example, who seethed with bigotry and resentment, expressed in so foul an idiom that a smarmy David Mamet character might blush. Yet P (as Nixon is called in *The Haldeman Diaries*) kept his scurrilous opinions of African-Americans, Jews, and Italian-Americans concealed from the public. And while it is undeniable that private feelings can affect or reinforce public positions (e. g., Robert Lansing's Near East strategy, or Nixon's Southern strategy), what counts in a democratic polity is less the prejudices that individuals harbor than their civic stance toward one another.

Though the Hebrew Bible, as the philosopher Hermann Cohen of Marburg pointed out, contains thirty-six injunctions to "love the stranger,"<sup>38</sup> that is a moral ideal that may be impossible to fulfill. The *political* ideal is less demanding, stemming from the question that Tina Turner has posed: What's love got to do with it? Democracy does not in fact demand love; it only demands tolerance, a willingness to share the public space in a spirit of mutual respect.

The tenacity of black anti-Semitism not only violates the conditions of democratic discourse, and not only represents a breach in the pattern that has emerged in the past half a century. It remains also, as August Bebel said of European anti-Semitism a century ago, "the socialism of fools." For Jews exert very little impact on the conditions of African-American life—especially at its most desperate edges. From the year Stone counseled patience until 1984, crime has risen horrendously; "the murder rate among blacks increased 65 percent. A black person is now seven times as likely to be murdered, four times as likely to be raped, three times as likely to be robbed and twice as likely to be assaulted. . . . America's average murder victim is a black boy between the ages of 12 and 15; 95 percent of the time his murderer is another black boy or man." Jesse Jackson's own summation is unsparing: "More young men die each year from gunshots than the total who have died from lynchings in the entire history of the United States. We have become our own worst enemy."<sup>39</sup> Blaming Jews for so appalling a homicide rate, or—for that matter—for any of the other pathologies that make the condition of the African-American underclass so dreadful—is quite beside the point. The arguments of traditional anti-Semitism have never withstood the tests of empirical scrutiny, and the updated version among some African-Americans does not differ from its antecedents in managing to escape from an inherent irrationality.



But even a once-popular rationale for anti-Semitism has become invalid: Jewish merchants, who once had a reputation for price-gouging and exploitation, have been absent from the ghetto for roughly a generation. Their disappearance did not prevent Muhammad, in a speech to an African-American women's club this spring, from calling Jews "blood-suckers of the poor."<sup>40</sup> But it is now the fate of mostly newer immigrant groups like Korean-Americans—whether in Brooklyn or in Los Angeles—to be the targets of resentment and rage.

Since the 1960s some features of African-American life have gone into a tailspin, and it must rankle that other racial minorities have been pushing ahead (without apparently provoking the sale of paranoid tracts denouncing "the yellow peril"). By living up to the imperatives of "this-worldly asceticism" that Max Weber had shown to be the way to wealth in Christendom since the Reformation, Japanese-Americans and Chinese-Americans generally enjoy incomes as high as any ethnic group, scuttling the charge that an unmodulated "racism" accounts for disparities among minorities. In a society where the *balseros* from Cuba were until recently more welcome than Haitian boat people, where Filipino physicians outnumber African-American doctors,<sup>41</sup> and where employers often seem more willing to hire immigrants—including "undocumented" workers—than the descendants of those brought in chains in the Middle Passage, but also where other African-Americans operate near the very top (from the United Nations to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Supreme Court to the Senate), "racism" has lost its simple allure as an explanation for incongruities in a multicultural nation. Even if discrimination were miraculously to disappear, it is not clear how attractive or remunerative the jobs would be for the men hanging out at Tally's Corner, or for 44 percent of the black population that, according to an estimate that Gates has circulated, "can't read the front page of a newspaper."<sup>42</sup>

Three decades ago the civil rights movement came close to insisting that it was as simple as black and white. Since then Negroes became blacks and then African-Americans, a designation that also relegates them to another hyphenated minority jostling for its place at the table (above the salt), competing for attention with others who insist upon entitlements in our Culture of Complaint. (The law may now be stretching entitlements to include the obese.)<sup>43</sup> An "identity politics" based heavily upon race has little chance if multiculturalism is taken seriously, because "the problem of the twentieth century" is more than "the problem of the color line." Lines of gender and class and sexual orientation can be traced too, crisscrossing on a planet of dwindling resources. The celebration of multiculturalism has been a mixed blessing to African-Americans, one suspects, because it makes

them look like one group among many, divided by claims sorted out by gender and class (and sexual orientation) as well.

Despite the democratic promise of multiculturalism, its complications may well have intensified the sense of frustration and bitterness and exclusion; and the struggle to express that estrangement, for the most burdened of all minorities, has resolved itself, for some, in only further and more irrational estrangement.

If it is obvious that the virulence of black anti-Semitism cannot be accounted for by damage Jews may have inflicted—any more than the historic racism of, say, Southern whites can be explained by what African-Americans did to *them*, then at least such wild resentment deserves no sympathy grounded in guilt. The histories of African-Americans and American Jews may not mirror each other very much; and it now looks a bit eccentric ever to have believed that their destinies were entwined, that they felt so much in common that they seemed joined at the hip. Irving Berlin, whose earliest childhood memory of Czarist Russia was a pogrom, wrote “God Bless America” (1938) in the same year Langston Hughes lamented that “America never was America to me.”<sup>44</sup> But perhaps American Jews must learn what many African-Americans have already known, that the status of victim makes no one humane. Pain need not ennoble, nor does it protect anyone against the temptations of bigotry. Atlantic Records’ Jerry Wexler, who grew up in the Great Depression as the son of an immigrant window-washer, has observed in his recent autobiography: “Suffering teaches us only that suffering has absolutely no value.” Farrell’s novel is also a reminder, if any were needed, that the exiles of the most distressful nation, who confronted not only nativist violence that Know Nothingism sanctioned but also economic discrimination (“No Irish Need Apply”), did not become champions of universal human rights. In our century they sometimes used sticks and stones to keep neighborhoods as bastions of what Jimmy Carter once called “ethnic purity.” Even Saul D. Alinsky, an organizer who enjoyed the support of the Roman Catholic Church, found that he could work with either Northern working class Catholics or with working class African-Americans—but not very effectively in tandem. Though his techniques of community building were imaginative enough to be the topic of Hillary Rodham’s 1969 Wellesley honors thesis, Alinsky could not reconcile diverse interests within the same class. The gap could not be closed, though both groups had been in their own different ways subjected to what would now be called “hate crimes.”<sup>45</sup>

The Jewish defense agencies were created early in the century to combat such evils, perpetrated in this country mostly against African-Americans. Because their plight has been so wrenching, many American Jews made the leap of believing that those who experienced such ordeals

had to be virtuous. Their character was sentimentalized, their spiritual wisdom exaggerated—though doubtless no champion of civil rights ever made so weird a misjudgment as Joel Chandler Harris, who had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a *pro*-slavery text, because a social system that could produce a character as elevated as its eponymous hero could not be all that bad.

But by now it should be clear that the mark of oppression is no sign of moral superiority. After attending a Farrakhan rally in New York City nearly a decade ago, Julius Lester chose not merely to address American Jews when he insisted that “the time has come to stop making apologies for black America, to stop patronizing black America with that paternalistic brand of understanding which excuses and finds reasons for the obscenities of black hatred and black anti-Semitism. . . . Farrakhan is subtly but surely creating an atmosphere in America where hatreds of all kinds will be easier to express openly.”<sup>46</sup> The battle against bigotry has thus become even more complicated than earlier in the century, and the history of these two particular minorities has become a tale told by an ironist.

## NOTES

1. I. F. Stone, “The Mason-Dixon Line Moves to New York,” in *Polemics and Prophecies: 1967–1970* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), p. 108.

2. *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, ed. Shlomo Katz (New York: Macmillan, 1967); *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, ed. Nat Hentoff (New York: Schocken, 1970); Amira Baraka, “Confessions of a Former Anti-Semite,” *Village Voice*, 25 (December 17–23, 1980), 1, 19–23.

3. Joseph Epstein, “Racial Perversity in Chicago,” *Commentary*, 86 (December 1988), 27–28, 34; Taylor Branch, “Blacks and Jews: The Uncivil War” (1989), in *Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews*, eds. Jack Salzman, Adina Back and Gretchen Sullivan Sorin (New York: George Braziller, 1992), pp. 50–69; Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity and the Civic Culture* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1990), p. 568; Nat Hentoff, “‘Speech Codes’ on the Campus and Problems of Free Speech,” in *Debating P. C.: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Laurel, 1992), p. 220.

4. Maria Newman, “CUNY Violated Speech Rights of Department Chief, Jury Says,” *New York Times*, May 12, 1993, p. B2; Edward Alexander, “Multiculturalism’s Jewish Problem,” *Academic Questions* (Fall, 1992), 5, 66.

5. Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993), pp. 14, 126; speech by Khalid Abdul Muhammad, November 29, 1993, quoted in Anti-Defamation League advertisement, *New York Times*, January 16, 1994, p. 24.

6. *Ibid.*; “Islam Speaker in New Tirade Against Jews,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1994, p. B1.

7. Paul Berman, “The Other and the Almost the Same,” *The New Yorker*, 70 (February 28, 1994), 61.

8. Quoted in Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975), p. 216; Stephan Leshner, *George Wallace: American Populist* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994), p. 348.

9. James T. Farrell, *Studs Lonigan* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 217–18, 402.
10. Herman Melville, "Misgivings," in *The New Oxford Book of American Verse*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 298.
11. Quoted in Berman, "The Other and Almost the Same," 61; David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 82–101; [Marc Caplan,] *Jew-Hatred as History: The Nation of Islam's "Secret Relationship"* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1993), pp. 36–37.
12. L. Robert Morris and Lawrence Raskin, *Lawrence of Arabia: The 30th Anniversary Pictorial History* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 7; Theodore Draper, *The Rediscovery of Black Nationalism* (New York: Viking, 1970), p. 88n; Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 79.
13. Eldridge Cleaver, "On Zionism and Racism," *New Leader*, 59 (February 16, 1976), 9.
14. James Baldwin, "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White" (1967), in *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948–1985* (New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1985), pp. 425–33.
15. Quoted in Tom Tugend, "Spielberg's Remembrance of Things Past," *Jerusalem Post Entertainment Supplement*, December 10–16, 1993, p. 3.
16. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 29.
17. Quoted in John Higham, *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), p. 183.
18. Quoted in Anti-Defamation League advertisement, *New York Times*, January 16, 1994, p. 24; Philip Taylor, *The Distant Magnet: European Immigration to the U. S. A.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 230n.
19. Hentoff, "'Speech Codes' on the Campus," p. 220; Robert Wistrich, *Hitler's Apocalypse: Jews and the Nazi Legacy* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), pp. 89–90, 177–82, 186, and "The Anti-Semitic Ideology in the Contemporary Islamic World," in *The Rising Tide of Antisemitism*, ed. Yaffa Zilbershats (London: Bar Ilan University, 1993), p. 71; Gabriel Kahn, "How Kean College Turned Into Hate U.," *Forward*, January 14, 1994, p. 4.
20. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 561.
21. Hentoff, "'Speech Codes' on the Campus," p. 220; Michael Kelly, "Howard's End," *New Republic*, 210 (March 21, 1994), 11–12; Joye Mercer and Douglas Lederman, "Aftermath of a Fiery Message," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 16, 1994, p. A31.
22. Alvin Poussaint to Charles Ogletree, in *Multiculturalism and Political Correctness*, ed. Pearl T. Mattenson (Boston: Anti-Defamation League, 1993), p. 18.
23. Quoted in Christopher Shea, "Dealing With Virulent Speakers," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 16, 1994, p. A32; "Howard University Postponed Lecture by a Jewish Historian," *New York Times*, April 16, 1994, p. 9; Mary Crystal Cage, "A Life Spent Interpreting the History of Slavery," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 4, 1994, p. A6.
24. John Leo, "Looking Back at a PC Extravaganza," *U. S. News and World Report*, 116 (January 31, 1994), 19.
25. Lois C. Richardson quoted in Shea, "Virulent Speakers," p. A32.
26. Tom W. Smith, *Anti-Semitism in Contemporary America* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1994), pp. 22–24, 27–28.
27. Higham, *Send These to Me*, p. 193.
28. Richard Wright, *Later Works: Black Boy and The Outsider*, ed. Arnold Rampersad (New York: Library of America, 1991), pp. 59–60; James Baldwin, "The Harlem Ghetto," in *Price of the Ticket*, p. 11.
29. Ralph Ellison, "The World and the Jug," in *Shadow and Act* (New York: Signet, 1966), pp. 132–33; Marian Anderson, *My Lord, What a Morning* (New York: Avon, 1967), pp. 185–87; LeRoi Jones, "Letter to Jules Feiffer," in *Home: Social Essays* (New York: Morrow, 1966), p. 67; Sammy Davis, Jr., and Burt and Jane Boyar, *Yes I Can* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965), pp. 148–49, 209–13, 280–85, 431–34, 457–58, 591–92.
30. Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: Knopf, 1988), pp. 352–54.

31. Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 266–69; Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Ruler, 1945–1970*, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1992), pp. 443–44; *New York Times*, July 7, 1967, quoted in Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America* (New York: Basic, 1993), p. 31.
32. Seymour Martin Lipset, “‘The Socialism of Fools’: The Left, the Jews, and Israel” (1969), in *The New Left and the Jews*, ed. Mordecai S. Chertoff (New York: Pitman, 1971), pp. 103–31.
33. Peter Y. Medding, “The New Jewish Politics in America,” in *Terms of Survival: The Jewish World since 1945*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 49 (in ms.); Charles E. Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* (New York: Summit, 1985), pp. 339–40, 351–52.
34. Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, p. 975n.
35. “I’m No Hitler, Farrakhan Tells Television Host,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1994, I, p. 23; Frank Rich, “Today She Would Be Frightened,” *International Herald Tribune*, March 4, 1994, p. 7.
36. Michael Kinsley, “Washington Diarist: FTV,” *New Republic*, 211 (July 4, 1994), 42.
37. Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), p. ix.
38. Quoted in Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism in the New Europe* (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 1994), p. 23.
39. Hanna Rosin, “Action Jackson: Jesse’s Volte-Face on Crime,” *New Republic*, 210 (March 21, 1994), 18.
40. “Islam Speaker in New Tirade Against Jews,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1994, p. B5.
41. Peter I. Rose, “Asian Americans: From Pariahs to Paragons,” in *Clamor at the Gates: The New American Immigration*, ed. Nathan Glazer (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1985), pp. 183–84; Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America* (New York: Basic, 1981), pp. 282–84; David A. Bell, “The Triumph of Asian-Americans,” *New Republic*, 193 (July 15 & 22, 1985), 26.
42. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Whose Canon Is It, Anyway?,” in *Debating P. C.*, p. 191; Edward S. Shapiro, “Blacks and Jews Entangled,” *First Things* 49 (August–September, 1994), 32–35.
43. Margaret Carlson, “And Now, Obesity Rights,” *Time*, 142 (December 6, 1993), 56; “The Fat of the Land is Eluding the Obese,” *International Herald Tribune*, January 25, 1994, pp. 1, 5.
44. Langston Hughes, “Let America Be America Again,” *A New Song* (New York: International Workers Order, 1938), in *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes*, eds. Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel (New York: Knopf, 1994), pp. 189–91.
45. Jerry Wexler and David Ritz, *Rhythm and the Blues: A Life in American Music* (New York: Knopf, 1993), p. 143; Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky—His Life and Legacy* (New York: Knopf, 1989), pp. 312–89, 425–49.
46. Kenneth S. Lynn, *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1959), p. 240; Julius Lester, “The Time Has Come,” *New Republic*, 193 (October 28, 1985), 12.

# *Glimpsing Golus in the Golden Land: Jews and Multiculturalism in America*

MICHAEL GALCHINSKY

Israel is bewildered;  
They have now become among the nations  
Like an unwanted vessel,  
Like a lonely wild ass.  
Hosea 8:8–9

THAT JEWS IN THE UNITED STATES EXPERIENCE A different kind of diaspora than their ancestors did at any time during the last two thousand years is by now a cliché. According to the proponents of this cliché, American Jews experience diaspora neither as an alienation from their deepest needs for rootedness and homeland, nor as an exile from God's pleasure, nor as an estrangement from their truest selves; rather, American Jews experience diaspora as a positive cultural opportunity. Moreover, the American diaspora is an opportunity from which Jews feel no need to "return." American Jews can sympathize with the generations of their ancestors in other lands who found consolation in the midst of their suffering by imagining a "return" to a place they called "homeland," but such longing depends upon persecution, from which American Jews do not suffer. In the 80s, Charles Silberman proclaimed that the great Melting Pot of liberal toleration has enabled American Jews to be more of a "certain people" than Jews have been at any other time since the Golden Age of Spain.<sup>1</sup> An updated 90s version of such an argument—often heard in the pages of current journals and elsewhere—has suggested that in these heady days of cultural transformation in American life, while the liberal Melting Pot is yielding to the multicultural Salad Bowl as a model for dealing with cultural diversity—even in these days Jews need not worry. On the contrary, says the proponent of American uniqueness, the new model is cause for rejoicing. In the multiculturalist emphasis on honoring the unique "voices" of multiple identity groups, Jews may find their fullest opportunities for cultural expression and survival. According to the cliché, then, America may be diaspora, but it isn't golus.

---

MICHAEL GALCHINSKY is Assistant Professor of English at Millsaps College. Along with David Biale and Susannah Heschel, he is coediting a volume of essays on Jews and multiculturalism, to be published by the University of California Press in 1996. He is the author of *Romance, Reform, and the Women of Israel: The Emergence of the Jewish Woman Writer in Victorian England*, forthcoming from Wayne State University Press.



So goes the argument for the special nature of American diaspora. But I, for one, was never much enamored of the old American liberal dispensation; and I am beginning to doubt whether multiculturalism has any more to offer the Jews.

Almost two hundred years ago, liberal Western nations made a deal with the Jews. Back in 1806, Napoleon convened his Assembly of Jewish Notables, and offered French Jews a chance to become full partners in the creation of the new republic. They weren't going to have to convert to Christianity. They weren't going to have to stop learning Torah. He was offering the eager Jews a liberal revolution, something he and they agreed to call "emancipation." He was promising the victimized Jews an end to their suffering, something he and they agreed to call "toleration." All Napoleon asked of them was a small favor in return: they were not to observe their Jewish practices outside of the home and the synagogue. They were to keep their differences to themselves. In essence, the offer could be stated this way: "Be a Jew at home; be a person on the street." It was a humanist offer, in retrospect, an offer of the melting pot. Come, melt your public aspect into ours, and become a part of our nation.

And the vast majority of the Jews did melt. They melted in France, they melted in England, they melted in America, and they tried very hard to melt in Germany, with more or less success, until the Holocaust. In most of these lands, the bargain offered by Napoleon seemed to hold for at least a century and a half. Jews gained entrance to many professions, at many levels, and many chose to maintain a certain reserve in coming out as Jews, feeling it would be safer not to flaunt themselves. It would be safer, economically and socially speaking that is, to maintain a wall between their public and their private selves. Psychologically, Jewishly—perhaps the benefits in these areas were less immediately visible.

Particularly in the academy, these trade-offs have been explicit and in some cases excruciating. Many American Jewish academics in the 1930s and 40s, for example, dedicated themselves to espousing something they called the "Judeo-Christian" tradition that included works by such Judeo-Christians as Shakespeare, Hegel, Goethe, Plato, and Nietzsche. Maimonides was not high on the list, not only because Jews feared reprisals for teaching Jewish texts, but because many of these academics themselves saw Judaism as an outdated, overly formulaic and superstitious religion, without much to offer serious progressive thinkers. Sometimes these scholars found that, despite their adherence to Napoleon's bargain, academic freedom had its limits. Lionel Trilling was unable to get a teaching job for seven years, and then Columbia only offered him an untenured instructorship. Later, Columbia asked him to leave because he was "a Freudian, a Marxist, and a Jew." His friend Elliot Cohen, eventual founder of the *Menorah Journal*, never

graduated from Yale's English Department because he suffered too much pressure to adhere to "the Anglo-Saxon tradition."<sup>2</sup> Economist Milton Friedman left a possible job at Wisconsin in the wake of an anti-Semitic incident, and his colleague Paul Samuelson was let go from Harvard in part because he was a Jew.<sup>3</sup>

After World War II, Jews began to make their way into the academy in growing numbers. Some, like Irving Howe, began to write about Jews—though, as Norman Finkelstein has argued, they restricted themselves to sociological and historical studies, feeling that "Judaism" itself was still not a safe or intellectually appropriate topic.<sup>4</sup> In any case, these Jewish sociologists and historians were a small minority of Jews in the academy. The vast majority of Jewish professors did not do Jewish work. In the 1960s, however, something happened on college campuses in the United States and elsewhere that surprised Jews who had accepted Napoleon's bargain. Other minorities began flaunting themselves, demanding funding for their histories and experiences. Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies—the number of interdisciplinary "Studies" mushroomed, and while many Jews looked on with fear, awe, and suspicion, others jumped on their chance. Now, these other Jews began to feel, we are finally through with enforced assimilation. Now, we will no longer have to melt. Now, we will come out of our closet, stop trying to pass, and begin to focus on our history and our experiences as Jews. We can finally have a piece of the multicultural pie—not as self-effacing individuals, but as members of a community. The doubleness we have felt for decades, the split personality that grew out of our constant need to separate our public from our private selves, will be a psychological dysfunction of the past. We will finally be able to tell the world our story from our point of view. Multiculturalism means that the academic community is ready to honor our difference.

Let me assure you that Napoleon's bargain is still in force.

To be sure, it is not enforced today in quite the same way as in the 40s. In each historical epoch, the contract manifests itself in a different manner. Back then, Jewish academics contended with a liberal melting pot culture in which it was safest for them to proclaim solidarity with the Western world. In the multiculturalist world of the salad bowl, however, which identifies "Western" as that which is dominant and oppressive, the strategy of identifying Jewishness as a Western tradition has seemed counterproductive. For Jews to be taken seriously under these conditions, they frequently feel the need to deny the existence of a "Judeo-Christian" culture—or to argue that any such culture that does exist is a product of Christian appropriation of Jewish thought. Multiculturalist Jews feel the need to argue for Jews' distinctiveness. Even when they do so, the multicultural new world seems little more inclined to welcome Jews than

the liberal old world. This is because when the word "multicultural" is used, it is often used to mean "people of color." Many "people of color" perceive the majority of American Jews to be "white," part of the monolithic unity, the "white West," against which the multiculturalist struggle takes place. With this perception, Jews are often definitionally excluded from multicultural gatherings. Pennsylvania State University and the University of California at Santa Barbara both recently held conferences on multiculturalism that focused on Native Americans, Latinos, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans, but not Jews. Jews are not part of the multiculturalist coalition.

Gloria Anzaldúa, in her second ground-breaking multiculturalist anthology, *Making Face, Making Soul, Haciendo Caras*, gives explicit expression to this idea. She refers to Jewish women as "white Jewishwomen" who "felt that their oppressions were the same or similar to those of women-of-color." But these "Jewishwomen" (and what is that portmanteau word, anyway, the name of some mythical half-female, half-Jewish beast?) must be excluded from the book because "Some *mujeres-de-color* questioned the concept of 'same' oppressions and claimed that all oppressions were being collapsed into one."<sup>5</sup> These anonymous "*mujeres-de-color*" did not, apparently, notice that by collapsing Asian women, African-American women, and Latinas into the single category *mujeres-de-color*, they were doing the same thing. What binds these groups together in Anzaldúa's view is that they have all suffered economic oppression and racism, whereas in her view American Jews, who are predominantly white, have not suffered economic oppression as a group, and have suffered only traces of anti-Semitism. In this understanding, the exclusion of Jews from certain neighborhoods thirty years ago is old news. The spread of JAP-baiting in recent years counts merely as individual, rather than systematic, prejudice designed to suppress all Jews economically and Jewish women psychologically. Let's for the sake of argument say that both points are valid. And let's agree for the moment that the solidarity of every group of nonwhite women does stand up to scrutiny (although it is not clear to me that Asian-Americans as a group have suffered the same kind of economic oppression as, say, African-Americans). Anzaldúa seems to suggest that multiculturalism is not about giving every group a voice, not about recognizing the integrity and value of each group's history, culture, and traditions: it is about constructing a hierarchy of oppressions. In the face of the disproportionate whiteness of university faculty, business leaders, and legislators, the utopian inclusionary model of multiculturalism gives way for Anzaldúa to the therapeutic exclusionary model.

If so, Jews doing Jewish work will continue to find little place in the academy—or, I would suggest, in the culture at large. After all, these

exclusions only replicate federal policy which for affirmative action purposes classifies Jews as white. (I always used to check "Other" and write in "Jewish," but now fewer and fewer forms provide an "Other" space.) Still, it was more than a little disconcerting for me to go to Ellis Island, Jewish national landmark if there ever was one, walk up to the map which displays "every ethnicity in America," and find that it does not have a category for Jews. If you want to find out where on the map Jews have settled, you have to push the button for "Poles" and then make an educated guess how much to subtract. I was imagining what my Bubie, whose shtetl in the Pale suffered a pogrom at Polish hands, would have to say about that.

And the Ellis Island phenomenon is not restricted to historical monuments. It extends throughout American culture wherever the new interest in race and ethnicity surface. An Israeli woman in Berkeley who recently applied for a position as a law clerk for a nonprofit civil rights organization was rejected on the grounds that no Israeli could understand the plight of oppressed minorities. My male Jewish friends who wear *kipot* on a regular basis tell me that, far from being recognized as a welcome sign of difference in a multicultural world, their *kipot* often seem to alienate other people. One man described his feeling of walking on his college campus in these terms: "I felt as though I was separated from everyone else in my own box." Jewishness is narrowly defined as a religious affiliation, without its cultural or ethnic affiliations—and therefore its signs (*kipot*) are perceived to represent an uncomfortable intrusion of religiosity into public life, threatening to violate the separation of church and state. Needless to say, in the semiotics of multiculturalism, dreadlocks or qassiyehs do not carry the same stigma. In these cases, Jews are being rejected or alienated for attempting to make the point that whiteness is complicated.

In the academy there is no scarcity of examples. The Modern Language Association, the professional association for scholars of literatures and languages, has a policy of funding new discussion groups when twenty-five scholars petition for it. Two years ago the MLA turned down a petition signed by over a hundred scholars to recognize a new discussion group in Jewish Cultural Studies, claiming that this area was already covered by the Hebrew Literature and Yiddish Literature divisions. At a conference two years ago at UCLA on the Jewish Stake in the Multicultural Academy, Jewish faculty from fields as diverse as engineering, law, anthropology, literature, women's studies, and sociology reported that Jews are generally accepted as long as they don't try to work as Jews. One professor after another reported that funding for individual courses or departments on Jewish subjects was not forthcoming. Scholars interested in Jewish anthropology are often told that Jewish culture is not a fit subject

for anthropological inquiry.<sup>6</sup> A graduate student in English doing his dissertation on American Jewish poetry told me he had been turned down for a number of jobs on the grounds that Jewish work was not mainstream enough to count as English, but was not minority enough to count as multicultural. Studies of anti-Semitic representations of Jews frequently find institutional homes in English departments; studies of what Jews have to say about their own cultures frequently do not.

To hear that Napoleon's bargain is still at work in 1994 was not especially surprising to me, but it was disappointing to hear that the multicultural version of it is so explicit. Evelyn Torton-Beck, one of the founders of the Women's Studies movement, has reported that, when the National Women's Studies Association was compiling a list of oppressions against which its members would struggle, many members argued strenuously to keep anti-Semitism off the list. Ultimately they agreed to include it only by redefining it as prejudice against both Jews and Arabs. As Torton-Beck said, there are two myths motivating a collapsing of oppressions like this: the first is that the word "Jew" is understood by progressives as code for the oppressive policies of the government of Israel against Palestinians. Since "Jews" are oppressors, it is impossible for them to be victims. This myth helped the NWSA dismiss millennia of Jewish expulsions and persecutions (including that old saw, the Holocaust) on the ground that Jews aren't pure enough victims. It made the NWSA incapable of recognizing the continued acts of violence against Jews here and abroad as acts motivated by belief in various strands of a widely available anti-Semitic ideology. Secondly, members of the NWSA echoed Anzaldúa when they objected that, because American Jews are white, can pass, have a firm standing in the middle class, and in recent years have voted for more and more conservative economic policies, they are the dominant culture.<sup>7</sup>

Jews are caught betwixt and between the liberal white dominant culture and the multicultural minority world. If we attempt to follow the old liberal model we need to continue to "mainstream" ourselves, to pass, to lead a double life. On the other hand, since we *can* pass, Jews cannot be included in the emerging culture of diversity. In the latter scenario, Jews confront a new multiculturalist version of Napoleon's bargain: "Be a Jew at home; study Native American law at school." The dream of being accepted fully into the public realm, our two faces merged into a single integrated image, this dream which we have tentatively aired in the light of day in recent years, begins to slip slowly back into the safety of our sleep. True, Jewish women can still make it in Women's Studies. Gay or lesbian Jews can still do Gay and Lesbian Studies. But the multicultural model requires them to "disappear" a piece of themselves.

The results are discouraging, to say the least: Jews *as Jews* are neither margin nor center, and there is no middle. And we don't have a patch on the multicultural quilt.

What can be done to secure Jews a place in the new academy, and in the changing culture at large? There are no easy answers. I do know that changing the multicultural view of Jews will take more than explanations. If Jews on the left explain to multiculturalists one more time that a lot of anti-Semitism hides out as anti-Zionism, and if, at the same time we admit that there *is* room for criticism of Israel and of the American Jewish center-right middle class coalition, we will not have convinced anybody to admit Jews into the fold. Ultimately, the complaint of many in the multicultural camp is not that Jews are part of the dominant culture, but that we *try* to be, whatever the cost. We are increasingly being seen by the left as the Slick Willies (as Candidate Clinton was derisively called) of the minority world. I see the argument this way: before, when you could fit in to the academic culture by being "white," you claimed Jews were the founders of Western civilization. Now that Western civilization has come under increasing criticism, and those who dole out privilege in the academy are increasingly becoming multiculturalists, you want to claim that Jews are just another marginalized group that has been brutalized. You can't have it both ways.

But while such a critique might identify some crucial instances of waffling on the part of individual scholars, it does not take account of the changing historical conditions in which Jewish scholars have operated. To change positions in response to a changing world is not waffling. Not to do so would be a reactionary entrenchment in a status quo no longer suited to the prevailing conditions. And, perhaps due to the constantly transforming conditions of our history, present-day Jewish scholars have developed very sensitive antennae. These antennae have been abuzz during the end of the Cold War, as scholars have sensed, fought against, and encouraged changes taking place within the Jewish community, as well as changes which have taken place in the dominant culture that will affect us. From within, the spread of Jewish Studies from a small number of outcroppings within Comparative Religion departments to a relatively large number of self-contained programs needs to be seen in context with the rise of other new Jewish movements in the late twentieth century, such as renewal, feminism, the Yiddish revival, the gay and lesbian rights movement, and the increase in *ba'alei tshuvah*. All of these movements in one way or another have been responding to the crisis of American Jewish self-alienation, to the flight of the young. They have been responding to the loss of identity and the knowledge vacuum that have developed in the generation of American Jewish suburbanization.



But if many Jews have been rediscovering our own rich and diverse traditions, traditions that include a long diasporic history of ways of managing to live in a multicultural society, it is not only due to internal pressures. The increased interest in Jewish culture needs to be understood in three “external” contexts. First, the increased interest nationally in the multiplicity of “American cultures” has been interpreted (erroneously) by Jews as an invitation to articulate our own contribution to the salad bowl. These articulations have reinforced and been reinforced by one of the crucial changes of the new world order, the recognition that what has been compartmentalized since Napoleon as the “religious” or the “personal” is interdependent with, not separate from, what has been compartmentalized as the “ethnic” or the “cultural.” And suddenly, with revisionist eyes, “progressive” scholars and “reconstructionists” have been scouring traditional Jewish texts once considered reactionary by their forebears for clues to the path of social justice. And when Jewish scholars have begun to celebrate what is meaningful and distinctive about Jewish history, religion, and culture, we are often accused of being too particular, narrow, and personal.

In addition to supporting a renewed interest in Jewish cultures and traditions, however, the end of the Cold War era has brought an increased sense of vulnerability for American Jews, as we have watched the incidence of anti-Semitism increase and spread in the new nations of Eastern Europe, in the reunified Germany, in France, in Britain, and in our own backyards. When Plymouth Rock has a swastika on it, and my grandfather’s tombstone is overturned by the KKK, and the Jewish Federation at which I used to work receives bomb threats, and the local Jewish bookstore receives White Aryan Resistance literature, and my friends’ synagogue has been set on fire, I begin to feel endangered. Even with the recent signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO, and the complicated efforts to constitute the new autonomous region in peace, Israel’s place in the New World Order is far from clear—so much that I worry that increased hostility from the international community to its actions will rebound on me as an American Jew. The new world has placed a premium on ethnicity, but what if my ethnicity is discounted or trivialized? Won’t I be left behind? Worse, what if I am singled out as the “white” group which must be punished for all their sins—“my” enslavement of the Africans, as Professor Jeffries would have it, “my” origination of patriarchy, as Christian feminists have sometimes claimed? I am afraid these days. As a Jew I am afraid, and that fear must be factored in to the work I do as an academic.

And when I close my eyes, my heart ablaze with fear, I realize that I have caught the wind of history and, in a flash, have ridden back two thousand years. I am surprised as I realize that my fear has always been the

same as it is today, as I wandered from state to state: What will happen to us if we cannot find a home? Will we be rejected as unwanted vessels, isolated as lonely wild beasts? Will our diaspora turn out to be, not merely a displacement from a previous "homeland," but alienation and exile? I realize that my fear was the same when I stood up in the Assembly of Jewish Notables and asked, What will happen to us, my friends, if we don't accept Napoleon's bargain? And I realize that the lump I feel in my stomach is the same as it was back then, when one of my Jewish neighbors responded, And what will happen to us if we do?

### NOTES

1. The phrase is from Charles Silberman's title and theme of his book, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives* (New York: Summit Books, 1985).
2. Diana Trilling, "Lionel Trilling, A Jew at Columbia," *Commentary* 67:40-6.
3. Leonard Silk, *The Economists* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974).
4. Norman Finkelstein, *The Ritual of New Creation: Jewish Tradition and Contemporary Literature* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992).
5. Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul, Haciendo Caras* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation, 1990), p. xx.
6. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).
7. Evelyn Torton Beck, "The Place of the Jewish Experience in a Multicultural Curriculum: The Case of Women's Studies," Paper delivered at UCLA, 1/3/93.

# *Elegy for My Father's Generation*

B E R N H A R D F R A N K

## I

The route across George  
Washington Bridge down  
a maze of cliff-lined  
highway is tortured and long.

The cousins leaning for-  
ward in the limo chatter  
like harpies determined  
to take my mind else-  
where

but the hearse  
10 feet ahead (he was  
5 foot 4) insists this is  
his last journey.

## II

Now I always  
afraid of heights am poised  
at the edge

an oversized grain  
at the hourglass center  
the past pushing  
the future  
sucking me down—  
It's a long way from the  
Bronx to Westwood.

## III

All the graves are new here  
at Beth El the stones  
raw still exude the

---

BERNHARD FRANK *teaches comparative literature and creative writing at Buffalo State College, SUNY. His poems and translations have also appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies. He was translator/editor of Modern Hebrew Poetry and Offering: Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke and Paul Verlaine, translator of Rilke's Duino Elegies and editor/publisher of the poetry journal Buckle from 1977 to 1982. A collection of his poems, American Gothic, was published by Goldengrove Press (1982).*

carver's breath    the shrubs  
mere dwarfs    in a giant landscape  
where rain & time have  
paid infrequent visits.

IV

Hamlet would have been  
surprised to find  
the gravediggers jabber  
in Spanish    & nearly drop  
the coffin on its side.

How heavy these shovels  
are    & how impatient.

*Yitgadal ve yitkadesh*

Alas, poor Eliezer (Ben  
Baruch) I knew you well.

V

A transplanted generation  
rests underfoot:

Gruenberg

Rosenfeld

Mandelbaum

You who grew new roots  
midway thru life  
Who sprouted once more  
in a strange land

You who twined two languages  
oddly into one  
Whose blossoms in old age  
secreted *our* nectar

The roots of the yew and  
hemlock applaud  
your presence now.

# *The Symbolism of the Sukkah*

J E F F R E Y L. R U B E N S T E I N

THE SUKKAH STANDS OUT AMONG ALL MITZVOT. IT IS the only commandment that involves a ritual dwelling. One is totally surrounded by the *mitzvah* for an extended period of time. For seven days, eating, sleeping, reading, relaxing, studying and almost all activities are performed within the *sukkah*. Yet the *mitzvah* is not only to eat, sleep, read, relax or study—but *to be*, to be within the *sukkah*. One simply enters the *sukkah*-space and the *mitzvah* is performed. One need not really do anything. No action, no gesture, no exertion, no effort is required. There is no real commandment to *build a sukkah* (although this is certainly a meritorious act), but only to stay in one. Surely a singular *mitzvah*.

What is the meaning of this ritual? What are we supposed to experience within the *sukkah*? What is the point of this extended stay? What does the *sukkah* symbolize? The answer to these questions is long and complex, for rituals and symbols operate on many levels, and have many meanings. This study explores one dimension of the symbolism of the *sukkah* and the accompanying religious experience: the *sukkah* as symbol of the clouds of glory and the experience of dwelling in its shade.<sup>1</sup>

## I. The *Sukkah* and the Clouds of Glory

The typical explanation for the *sukkah* is that it symbolizes the booths in which the Israelites dwelled during their journey through the desert. On Passover we eat matzah because our ancestors ate matzah when they left Egypt, and on *Sukkot* we reside in booths to commemorate those in which they lived for forty years. This explanation follows from Lev 23:42–43, the source of the commandment:

You shall live in *sukkot* seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in *sukkot*, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in *sukkot* when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God.

Yet this understanding is not as simple as it seems at first glance. We should not immediately picture the Israelites actually dwelling in the type of booths that we build today. Leviticus relates that they dwelled in *sukkot*, but does not say what those *sukkot* were. The rabbis debated exactly what this meant. In the *Sifra*, the halakhic midrash to Leviticus, we find the following dispute:

---

DR. JEFFREY L. RUBENSTEIN is Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University.

R. Eliezer says: They were real sukkot. R. Akiba says: The sukkot were the clouds of glory.<sup>2</sup>

For R. Eliezer the Israelites dwelled in real booths in the desert. For R. Akiba, however, the Israelites did not reside in booths at all! They dwelled amidst the “clouds of glory,” within the clouds that marked the presence and radiance of God. R. Akiba’s opinion became the majority rabbinic interpretation. It is found in the targums (the Aramaic translations of the Torah), in later midrashim, and in medieval codes.<sup>3</sup> Thus the dominant trend in Jewish thought never pictured the exodus generation dwelling in leafy huts but rather in glorious clouds. The leafy *sukkot* we build symbolize those clouds.<sup>4</sup>

Why did R. Akiba interpret the exodus *sukkot* as clouds?

First, *sukkot* are generally not found in the desert. They are built in fields for the protection of watchmen, workers or animals and constructed from the products of the field—leaves, branches, reeds, foliage, wood and hay. Where would the Israelites have found such materials in the desert wasteland? Desert travelers stay in tents, not booths.

Second, outside of this lone verse in Leviticus, the Bible never claims that the Israelites stayed in booths. There are several descriptions of the camp of the Israelites in the desert, but not one pictures the tribes dwelling in *sukkot*. Tents are occasionally mentioned, but never booths.<sup>5</sup> Why does Lev 23:42 suddenly assume that the Israelites dwelled in *sukkot*, while the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy know nothing about it?

Third, Leviticus relates that God “made the Israelite people dwell in *sukkot*,” not that “the Israelite people built *sukkot* for themselves.” This implies that God provided the *sukkot*.<sup>6</sup> But if God made the *sukkot*, we might expect them to be miraculous and supernatural. A God who brought ten plagues, signs, and wonders can certainly be expected to provide more than simple shacks. Moreover, it is more likely that we are commanded to reside in booths to commemorate a miracle than a routine and ordinary mode of dwelling. If there is nothing special about the exodus *sukkot*, why make a religious institution out of it?<sup>7</sup>

Two other considerations influenced R. Akiba. First, the word *sukkah* in the Bible sometimes refers to a cloud-covering. The Psalmist describes the celestial manifestation of God in vivid imagery: “He made darkness His screen; dark thunderheads, dense clouds of the sky were His *sukkah* round about him (Ps 18:11–12).” Likewise Job 36:29 relates: “Can one, indeed, contemplate the expanse of clouds, the thunderings from His *sukkah*?” The storm-cloud from which God thunders is pictured as the divine pavilion or *sukkah*. Note that the language “His *sukkah*” might hint at the type of *sukkot* in which God “made the Israelite people live.” God made them live in “His *sukkot*,” in clouds. Isaiah prophesies that a cloud will hover above Mt. Zion and “shall serve as a *sukkah* for shade from heat by day and for shelter and



protection against drenching rain.”<sup>8</sup> Thus a cloud can be described as a “*sukkah*”; the terms can be used synonymously. Second, while booths are never mentioned in the exodus narratives, clouds are always found around the Israelite camp. God provided a pillar of cloud to lead the Israelites in the desert<sup>9</sup> and speaks to Moses from the midst of the cloud.<sup>10</sup> God also appears above the tent of meeting in the form of a cloud.<sup>11</sup> Now it turns out that the pillar of cloud first appears at a place called *Sukkot*! Exod 12:5 relates that the Israelites “journeyed from Raamses to *Sukkot*.” They soon depart with a wondrous escort:

(Exod 13:20) They set out from *Sukkot* and encamped at Etham, at the edge of the wilderness. (13:21) The Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, to guide them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light.

R. Akiba interpreted the term *sukkot* not as a place, but in light of the following verse. The Israelites “set out from *sukkot*,” from the clouds within which they had camped, and which thereafter led the way in the desert.

We now have all the clues to appreciate R. Akiba’s interpretation. Given the considerations above, R. Akiba found it difficult to interpret *sukkot* of Lev 23:42 as real booths. On the other hand, he noted that the term *sukkah* in poetic biblical passages sometimes referred to a cloud-*sukkah*. Moreover, the only appearance of the term *sukkot* in the Exodus narrative occurs just before the first description of the pillar of cloud. He reasoned that the term *sukkot* in Lev 23:42, in which God “made the Israelites dwell,” must refer to that divine cloud.<sup>12</sup> The Israelites never resided in leafy huts, but among divine *sukkah*-clouds, the “clouds of glory.”<sup>13</sup>

## II. The Nature of the Clouds of Glory

Since the *sukkah* symbolizes the clouds of glory in which the exodus generation lived, it is necessary to investigate how the rabbis conceived of the clouds. The clearest description is provided by Tosefta Sotah 4:2

God gave to [Abraham’s] children seven clouds of glory in the desert, one to their right, and one to their left, one before them, and one after them, and one above their heads, and one as the *shekhina* that was in their midst. And the pillar of cloud would precede them, killing snakes and scorpions, burning brush, thorns and bramble, reducing mounds and raising low places, and making a straight path for them, a continuous, ongoing highway, as it is said, *The ark of the covenant of the Lord traveled in front of them (Num 10:33).*<sup>14</sup>

The clouds of glory envelop the Israelites on all four sides and form a type of force field around the camp. The seventh cloud obliterates dangers that lie before them and smooths the rough desert terrain so that the journey would be manageable. One of the clouds is called the *shekhina*, the divine

presence, and stands in the middle of the camp as symbol of God's nearness. Already we sense the three main characteristics of the clouds of glory that appear in rabbinic traditions: protection, presence, and love.

First, protection. The Tosefta describes how the clouds destroyed snakes and scorpions, ensuring that the Israelites would not be harmed as they marched through the wilderness. The clouds naturally sheltered the Israelites from the hot sun overhead and, more miraculously, insulated them from the hot sand below their feet.<sup>15</sup> Yet the clouds not only provided protection against natural dangers, but they protected Israel from their enemies. According to the *Mekhilta*, when the Egyptians tried to attack the Israelites on the shores of the Sea of Reeds, they "would shoot at them arrows and stones from their catapults, which the angel and the cloud intercepted."<sup>16</sup> The clouds also protect Moses and Aaron from stones thrown at them during the incidents of the murmurings of the people.<sup>17</sup> The clouds even provided personal protection for the individual Israelite wherever he or she went: "If one of the Israelites was drawn away from the wings of the cloud, the cloud would be drawn with him, behind him, until he returned [to the camp]."<sup>18</sup> Given this absolute protective shield, the rabbis are pressed hard to explain how the Israelites could have been vulnerable to attack. Commenting on the Amalekite assault upon the "stragglers" at the rear of the camp (Deut 25:18), the midrash explains that the enemy could harm only those "who 'straggled' from [obeying] God's ways and found themselves cast out from under the wings of the cloud."<sup>19</sup> Only when the Israelite sinned and lost the protection of the cloud was he exposed to attack. In a later version of the midrash, the Amalekites must trick the Israelites into leaving the enclosure of the clouds of glory.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the rabbis explain that the Canaanite King of Arad was only able to attack the Israelites because the clouds of glory temporarily disappeared following the death of Aaron (Num 21:1-2).<sup>21</sup> While the clouds covered the camp, the Israelites were inviolable. And they possessed the ability to heal. When the Israelites were scorched by fire following the revelation on Mt. Sinai, God sent the clouds of glory to discharge a therapeutic dew over the people.<sup>22</sup>

Second, the presence of God. As a miraculous guide and escort through the desert, the clouds clearly symbolize the continual presence of God among the Israelites. The "glory" is of course "God's glory," the *kavod*, with which the biblical authors depict God's tangible presence.<sup>23</sup> Tosefta Sotah calls one of the clouds the "*shekhina* in their midst," and other sources employ the term '*anan shekhina*, the "cloud of the presence."<sup>24</sup> Several midrashim identify the *shekhina* with the clouds: "When Israel saw the pillar of cloud they knew that the *shekhina* revealed itself to Moses."<sup>25</sup> Num 12:10 relates that the cloud rose from the tent after Aaron and Miriam murmured against Moses, and the midrash comments that "immediately the *shekhina*

departed.<sup>26</sup> The mosaic of the Beit Alpha synagogue and the paintings of the Dura synagogue also symbolize the presence of God by a cloud.<sup>27</sup>

Third, divine love. The midrash describes the initial appearance of the clouds of glory in terms of a wedding:

*And the children of Israel went from Raamses towards Sukkot (Exod 12:37). . . . Sukkot of clouds of glory came and settled upon the roofs of Raamses. They made a parable: What is this like? To a groom who brought a canopy ('apiryon) to the entrance of the house of his wife in order that she would come to him immediately.<sup>28</sup>*

Above we noted that R. Akiba interpreted the term *sukkot* not as a place but as the clouds of glory. The advent of these *sukkah*-clouds is compared to the arrival of the wedding canopy, the *huppa* or *apiryon*, at the home of the bride. God, as it were, signaled his love for the Israelites, his readiness to consummate a marriage, by sending his canopy, the *sukkah*-clouds. When they entered the clouds of glory the Israelites entered the domain of a loving husband. A later midrash insists that although the Israelites worshipped the molten calf, God "did not cease loving them. The clouds of glory accompanied them, and the well and the Manna did not cease."<sup>29</sup> The clouds of glory, the mythical well, and the Manna thus serve as outstanding symbols of God's love.

In other passages the clouds of glory represent paternal love.

*And the pillar of cloud moved from before them and went behind them (Exod 14:19).* R. Yehuda said: Here is a verse made rich in meanings by many passages. He made of it a parable; to what is the matter similar? To a king who was going on the way, and his son went before him. Brigands came to kidnap him from in front. He took him from in front and placed him behind him. A wolf came behind him. He took him from behind and placed him in front. Brigands in front and the wolf in back, he took him and placed him in His arms, for it says, *I have pampered Ephraim, taking them on My arms (Hos 11:3).*

The son began to suffer; He took him on his shoulders, for it is said, *In the desert which you saw, where the Lord, your God carried you (Deut 1:31).*

The son began to suffer from the sun; He spread on him His cloak, for it is said, *He has spread a cloud as a curtain (Ps 105:39).*

He became hungry; He fed him. . . . He became thirsty, He gave him drink. . . .<sup>30</sup>

The parable compares the relationship of the cloud and the Israelites in the desert to that of a king and his son on a journey. When dangers arise the king takes precautions to protect his son. The analogy suggests that the clouds of glory are not simply an impersonal screen, shield, or barrier, but are associated with love and nurture. This sentiment also emerges from the Hosean proof-text where God holds Ephraim (= Israel) in His arms like a father doting upon his son. Two verses earlier in Hosea God relates how he

“fell in love with Israel when he was still a child, and have called [him] My son ever since Egypt” (Hos 11:1). The clouds in the desert enveloping the Israelites on all sides are understood as the embrace of God’s arms and his paternal love. That the king supplies the needs of his son, providing him food, water, and shade, also expresses love in addition to mere protection.

The clouds of glory are therefore associated with the protection, presence, and love of God. The *sukkah*, which symbolized the clouds, should likewise be associated with these ideas. Several sources indeed link divine protection and love directly to the *sukkah*. Consider *Shir HaShirim Rabba* 2:6:

*His left hand is under my head—that means the sukkah. And his right hand embraces me (Song 2:6)—that means the cloud of the shekhina in the world to come.*<sup>31</sup>

The Song of Songs was understood by the rabbis as an allegory of God’s relationship to Israel. The midrash regularly translates the poetic biblical imagery into more concrete terms which derive from Jewish historical and ritual experience. The tender embrace of the two lovers narrated in the Song of Songs, interpreted in terms of God’s love for Israel, is coordinated with the *sukkah* and the “cloud of the *shekhina*.” Thus the *sukkah* was a sign of divine embrace and symbolized divine love. The midrash also reveals that the rabbis expected the clouds of glory to return in the world to come and to guide the people as they had during the exodus.<sup>32</sup> In this world the clouds of glory, which embody God’s presence and love, are symbolized by the *sukkah*, but in the next world *sukkot* will not be needed—the clouds will reappear and permanently manifest the divine presence.

A fascinating tradition relates divine protection directly to the *sukkah*:

You [Israel] are a vineyard, as it says, *For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel (Isa 5:7)*. Make a *sukkah* for the guard so that He may guard you.<sup>33</sup>

This midrash picks up on the original function of the *sukkah* as a protective shelter for guards or workers in the fields. Isaiah compares Israel to a vineyard and God to the owner or guard. The midrash extends the metaphor by enjoining that Israel build *sukkot* for its guard. Just as the guard dwells in the *sukkah* and watches over the field, so God will dwell in the *sukkah* and protect its occupant. There is some irony in this interpretation in that the *sukkah* typically shelters the guard, who in turn watches over the field, yet God obviously needs no shelter from the *sukkah*. Rather the *sukkah* becomes a symbolic space for God to dwell among his people. One can see that this tradition is related to the conception of the *sukkah* as a symbol of the clouds of glory, the manifestation of the presence and protection of God. Here the symbolism is reified: God—not his glory or cloud—actually enters the festival *sukkah*.

### III. Religious Experience, the *Sukkah*, and Shade

The *sukkah* thus symbolizes the clouds of glory, protection, the divine presence, and love. The ritual dwelling in the *sukkah* should cause the occupant to experience these sentiments. But how? Of course knowledge of what the *sukkah* symbolizes might call the symbolism to mind and invite one to appreciate it. On the other hand, intellectual knowledge does not always translate into experience, and it is the living experience of divine protection, presence, and love, not these concepts in the abstract, that makes the ritual work. To understand the religious experience of dwelling in the *sukkah*—to grasp how the symbolism is actually experienced—it is necessary to investigate the rabbinic conception of the *sukkah*. And to do so we must turn to the halakhic sources that define the rabbinic *sukkah* rather than aggadic traditions about its symbolism.

The defining characteristic of the *sukkah* in rabbinic sources is that it produce shade. The first Mishna in the tractate rules that a *sukkah* must produce more shade than sun, and much of the following legislation governs how the shade may and may not be produced. *Skhakh*, the thatched roofing that casts the shade, is the major requirement of the *sukkah*. Few laws relate to the walls of the *sukkah*, other than establishing a minimum number and maximum and minimum height.<sup>34</sup> That four posts of a mere handbreadth in diameter may serve as “walls” and that the walls may be made from almost any substance suggest that they are of secondary import.<sup>35</sup> The *skhakh*, on the other hand, is meticulously regulated.<sup>36</sup> In elucidating these and other laws the talmudic commentaries conclude that *skhakh* and shade are the essence of the *sukkah*. Thus the Tosafot comment:

Granted that we do not worry about the walls, whether one makes them permanent, nevertheless, with the *skhakh*—because the essence of the [term] ‘*sukka*’ is on account of [its having] *skhakh*—it is not fit. . . .<sup>37</sup>

Rashi observes, “It is called a *sukkah* on account of the shade, since it provides shelter (*mesukakh*) from the heat.”<sup>38</sup>

Several other laws demonstrate the importance of shade. A *sukkah* constructed within a house is not valid.<sup>39</sup> In this case the *sukkah* does not provide shade. It does not screen the occupant from the sun or provide protection against the elements, for the whole structure is contained under the solid ceiling of the house.

Likewise one who sleeps under the bed in a *sukkah*, or eats beneath a sheet or some other barrier, has not fulfilled his obligation.<sup>40</sup> In this case he does not directly experience the shade produced by the *sukkah*. The requirement is not simply that there be shade, but that the shade be experienced by the occupant. This law illustrates that symbolism alone is insufficient. The rabbis are concerned that a religious experience take place.

The Mishna rules that a *sukkah* may not be constructed under a tree.<sup>41</sup> This law is extremely significant. In this case the resident experiences shade. The environment created within the *sukkah* is identical to that of a *sukkah* that does not stand beneath a tree—shade produced by leaves, branches, or foliage. But this *sukkah* is not valid because the resident does not experience the shade *from the skhakh*. Rabbinic law insists that the *sukkah*—the *skhakh*—produce shade and that the occupant experience the shade of the *sukkah*.

A telling exception to the laws of *skhakh* also emphasizes the centrality of shade. The Mishna rules that wooden beams of a certain size may not be used for *skhakh*, and that if a single beam of sufficient size is placed on the *sukkah*, the resident may not sleep under it.<sup>42</sup> Wooden beams, however, meet the demands the rabbis established for *skhakh*: they derive from organic matter and they are not presently growing in the ground.<sup>43</sup> The Talmud explains that the reason beams are disqualified is that they begin to resemble a normal ceiling.<sup>44</sup> Like plaster, bricks or large boards, wooden beams create the inside of the abode, not a shaded place. Shade is a comparative concept; it is the lesser brightness or heat caused by an object intercepting rays of light. To recognize shade involves an awareness of an area in which light is absent even as the sun is perceived in the environs. The rabbis disqualified beams to ensure that a *sukkah* produce shade that could be experienced.<sup>45</sup>

Several laws concerning the structure of the *sukkah* are justified by considerations of shade. Mishna *Sukkah* 1:1 rules that a *sukkah* may not be more than twenty cubits high. R. Zera and R. Abahu in the name of R. Yohanan explain that when the roof reaches such a height, its shade does not extend to the ground, and hence one does not reside in the shade of the *sukkah*.<sup>46</sup> In this case the shade comes from the walls, which are not considered the essence of the *sukkah*.<sup>47</sup> Rabba, on the other hand, explains that if the roof is higher than twenty cubits, one does not “know” that he is inside a *sukkah*.<sup>48</sup> At such a height the resident is unaware of the *skhakh* above him, although he may be well aware of the nearby walls. These amoraic explanations presuppose the necessity that the resident experience the shade produced by the *skhakh*.

The desire to create shade seems to be primarily responsible for the laws that define *skhakh* as foliage. *Skhakh* must come from materials that “had roots in the soil,” from vegetation of various sorts. The Mishna’s examples of materials used for *skhakh* are all substances that provide shade: cut foliage, such as straw, wood or brushwood; vines, gourds, and ivy; sheaves of grain, stalks, and bundles of stubble.<sup>49</sup> The laws makes sense if we understand that shade is generally associated with trees and other vegetation, as in the hot summers of the Middle East.

One should not think that the concept of *skhakh* or the requirement to experience shade is an inherent aspect of the *sukkah*, as if these laws are



“natural” or “inevitable.” The Bible only commands that one reside in a *sukkah*; it gives no instructions as to how it should be built.<sup>50</sup> The Samaritans, for example, build *sukkot* within their houses.<sup>51</sup> Their exegetes relied exclusively on the written Torah and arrived at that practice. The rabbis, on the other hand, with the oral law, defined the *sukkah* in terms of *skhakh* and shade. These are characteristic of the rabbinic conception of the *sukkah*, and create the religious experience the rabbis intended.

#### IV. The Shade of God

To dwell in the *sukkah* is to experience shade. The resulting *religious* experience derives from the meanings of shade in Jewish tradition. Shade represents protection, the divine presence, and love—the main characteristics of the clouds of glory!

In the most basic terms shade provides protection from the blazing sun. Recall that Jonah was extremely happy in the shade of his *sukkah* and so uncomfortable when the gourd withered that he wished for death.<sup>52</sup> Shade therefore became a metaphor for general protection. Lot beseeches the Sodomites not to harm the strangers who have come under the “shade of my [roof-]beam,” that is, the protection of his domain.<sup>53</sup> This metaphor is widely applied to the protection that a leader or king provides. Isaiah prophesies doom for those who dare: “To seek refuge with Pharaoh, To seek shelter under the shade (protection) of Egypt. The refuge with Pharaoh shall result in your shame; the shelter under Pharaoh’s shade in your chagrin.”<sup>54</sup> The same metaphor is regularly applied to the protection provided by God: “The Lord is your guardian, the Lord is your shade (shadow) at your right hand. . . . The Lord will guard you from all harm, He will guard your life.”<sup>55</sup> The most profound biblical expression of this symbolism appears in Ps 91:

- (1) O you who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, and abide in the shade (*seṭ*) of Shaddai—
- (2) I say of the Lord, my refuge and stronghold, my God in whom I trust,
- (3) That he will save you from the fowler’s trap, from destructive plagues
- (4) He will cover (*yasekh*) you with His pinions; you will find refuge under his wings; His fidelity is an encircling shield.

To reside in the shade of God is to be within a divine “shelter,” “refuge,” “stronghold,” and “shield.” He who does so is protected from snares, diseases, and plagues described in the rest of the Psalm. The psalmist uses the metaphor of the sheltering wings of a bird, an image which evokes a sense of maternal love in addition to protection. The Bible often expresses

this metaphor more graphically as the “shade of God’s wings,”<sup>56</sup> which also evokes a sense of love: “How precious is Your faithful care, O God! Mankind shelters in the shade of your wings.”<sup>57</sup>

Rabbinic traditions display similar associations with shade. R. Abahu interprets Hos 14:8, “Those who sit in his shade shall be revived,” in terms of gentiles “who come and take refuge in the shade of the Holy One, Blessed be He.”<sup>58</sup> Thus the image for conversion, for “drawing near” and seeking refuge with God, is that of entering under God’s shade. Potential converts find God’s presence manifested as shade. The following parable expresses a related idea:

Whoever learns the Torah, Prophets and Writings, Mishna and midrash, halakhot and aggadot and serves the sages—God Himself guards him. They made a parable. To what is it similar? To a king who was walking with his son in the desert. When they encountered the sun and the burning heat, the father stood up in the sun and made shade for his son, so that he should not be touched by the sun and burning heat. Thus it is written, *The Lord is your guardian, the Lord is your shade at your right hand (Ps 121:5).*<sup>59</sup>

The biblical verse, which describes God as shade (or shadow), is interpreted in terms of God guarding the individual. One merits that protection by studying Torah. The parable of the king and his son again goes beyond protection and introduces a sense of paternal love. Indeed, this parable should call to mind the parable related to the clouds of glory, cited above, which also compared the protection of clouds to that which the king provides for his son. Note that when the boy suffers from the heat of the sun, the king interposes his body to protect him. Thus the kings in the two parables, and the cloud and God in the applications, all provide shade. The qualities of the clouds of glory and those of the shade produced by the *sukkah* are strikingly similar.<sup>60</sup>

A development of this imagery appears in the concept of the “shade of God” in rabbinic sources. This notion goes beyond the metaphoric use of shade and postulates a concrete manifestation of the divine protective presence. According to the midrash, “were it not for the shade of God that protects a human being, the demons (*mezigim*) would kill him.”<sup>61</sup> The Palestinian Talmud promises that “whoever engages in [the study] of Torah and acts of loving-kindness will sit in the shade of God.”<sup>62</sup> The “shade of God” thus relates to a substantive realm that bestows God’s special care. That shade is the most perfect protection:

How great is the power of those who are righteous and those who do good deeds! They do not find shelter [merely] in the shade of dawn, nor the shade of the wings of the earth, nor the shade of the wings of the sun, nor the shade of the wings of animals, nor the shade of the wings of the Cherubim, nor the shade of the wings of the Serafim, but in the shade of Him Who Spoke and

the World Came into Being. That is the meaning of the verse, *How precious your faithful care, O God! Mankind shelters in the shade of your wings (Ps 36:8).*<sup>63</sup>

The midrash turns on the metaphoric meaning of shade as protection, and postulates many levels of shelter corresponding to the different providers of shade. It promises, however, that those who perform good deeds are not simply protected in this metaphoric shade but in the very "shade of God," the highest form of protection.

The pieces of the puzzle are now complete. Shade is an expression of the sheltering divine presence,<sup>64</sup> while the clouds of glory represent the tangible form of the presence. A close parallel between the halakha and the aggada emerges. *Shade in the halakha parallels the clouds of glory in the aggada.* The laws deeming a *sukkah* valid only if there is more shade than sunlight parallel the symbolism of the *sukkah* as a divine cloud. The laws that define the nature of *skhakh* and require that the resident dwell under its shade reflect the aggadic conception that the clouds enveloped the Israelites on all sides.<sup>65</sup> Shade therefore links the associations of the clouds of glory with the annual commandment to reside in the *sukkah*. Jews dwell directly beneath the shade of the *sukkah* just as their ancestors dwelled within the protective shelter and the shade of the clouds. At a deeper level, both the halakhic and aggadic traditions are reflections and expressions of the religious experience of dwelling in the *sukkah*. Residing in the shade of the *sukkah* is to experience divine protection, love, and intimacy. The laws that require *skhakh* and that govern the nature of the *sukkah* create the environment where that experience takes place, while the clouds of glory which the *sukkah* symbolizes convey the same cluster of emotions.

#### V. Shade and the *Sukkah* in Jewish Thought

The symbolism we have been exploring occasionally found clear expression in medieval and modern Jewish thinkers. Meir ben Gedaliah of Lublin (Maharam) in his commentary to Tractate *Sukkah* explains:

This is what the verse (Lev 23:42) means: *You shall live in sukkot* in order that *future generations* will remember the surrounding clouds of glory that were in the desert. By what means will they remember the surrounding clouds of glory? When they see and perceive that they dwell in the shade of the *skhakh* of the *sukkah*.<sup>66</sup>

A clear and succinct expression of this symbolism! Surrounded by the shade of the *sukkah*, the occupant is moved to recall the clouds of glory that surrounded the Israelites in the desert, providing shade and protection. Note that the Maharam specifies that the symbolism is experienced by actually dwelling in the shade. Simply to look at a *sukkah*, even if one knows that it symbolizes the clouds of glory, is not sufficient. Rabbi Yeḥiel Mekhiel

Epstein, in his code *'Arukh HaShulhan* develops this trend of thought by connecting the protective shade of the *sukkah* to the aftermath of Yom Kippur:

On Yom Kippur, when we repent, God forgives our sins. The proof of this is that immediately after Yom Kippur he commands us to make a *sukkah*, so that we dwell in the shade of the Holy Blessed One, as it says, "*I love to sit in his shade* (*Song 2:3*)—this is the commandment of the *sukkah*. . . ." This teaches that despite all our sins, God still loves us and watches over us to protect us from all sorrow and harm. He causes us to dwell in his holy and pure shade, and he shelters (*sokeh*) us.<sup>67</sup>

The proximity of *Sukkot* to Yom Kippur stimulates Rabbi Epstein to attribute a special assurance or reassurance to the meaning of the ritual dwelling.<sup>68</sup> The Days of Awe and the process of repentance—recounting sin, resolving to improve, asking for forgiveness—creates a psychological distance between the people and God. The High Holiday liturgy indeed pictures God more as an imposing judge and powerful king than a loving parent. And despite the promise of forgiveness, the penitent cannot help but worry that the judge has rejected his repentance and consigned him to suffer for his sins. The *sukkah* restores the harmonious and loving relationship between God and the people. By entering in the "holy and pure shade" of God, the Jew is welcomed back into the divine presence. She experiences the proximity and love of God, and internalizes the fact that sin has been forgiven and the relationship restored. The shelter provided by *skhakh* is the (almost) tangible sign that God again shelters—*sokeh*—the occupant.<sup>69</sup>

Medieval Qabbala refracted this symbolism through a mystical lens so as to attach mystical importance to dwelling in the *sukkah*.<sup>70</sup>

*It shall serve as a sukkah for shade by day* (*Isa 4:6*). Thus [a *sukkah*] requires *skhakh*. The purpose of *skhakh* is to provide shade, as it says *He abides in the shade of Shaddai* (*Ps 91:1*). Not in the shade of an ordinary *sukkah* (*sukkat hediot*) which protects one's body from the sun. But in shade that protects his soul.<sup>71</sup>

The Zohar invokes the notion of the shade of God (*Shaddai*), and explains that this divine shade provides a mystical protection of the soul, rather than physical protection from the elements. The shade of the ritual *sukkah*, unlike the shade of an ordinary *sukkah*, has this crucial power. The idea of the "shade of faith," a prominent idea in the Zohar, is naturally associated with the *sukkah*, and seems to be a development of the "shade of God" found in rabbinic sources. The exodus generation dwelled under the clouds of glory in the "shade of faith," and those who now dwell in *sukkot* dwell in that same shade and merit divine blessing: "He who dwells beneath the shade of faith gains freedom both for himself and for his descendants forever and is blessed from the blessings from on High."<sup>72</sup> The shade of faith found in the *sukkah*

"will illuminate him, cover him and shield him when he requires it."<sup>73</sup> The *sukkah* thus represents the high spiritual level—complete trust, faith, and knowledge of God—to which the qabbalist aspires. The Zohar even identifies the "shade of faith" and the *sukkah* itself directly with the *shekhina*, one of the ten divine hypostases (sefirot) in the qabbalistic conception of God.<sup>74</sup> Those who dwell in the *sukkah* are surrounded by God and inviolable. The *shekhina-sukkah* "is the supernal mother who shelters you like a mother [shelters] her children."<sup>75</sup> In this way maternal love and intimacy are also connected with the dwelling in the *sukkah*.

The well-known custom of *ushpizin*, of inviting "guests" in the *sukkah*, reflects yet another transformation of this symbolism into mystical terms: "When one sits in this dwelling, the shade of faith, the *shekhina* spreads her wings over him from above, and Abraham and five other righteous heroes come to dwell with him."<sup>76</sup> The seven "guests" or "heroes"—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joseph, Aaron, and David (= the *shekhina*)—are seven sefirot. These were identified with the seven clouds of glory and the seven days of the festival. Each day of *Sukkot* the qabbalists invited these seven sefirot to abide with them in the *sukkah*. Just as the Israelites in the desert were accompanied by the seven sefirot (the clouds), so the qabbalists summoned the sefirot to surround them in their *sukkot*, which symbolized the clouds. Above we cited a midrash which enjoined that one make a *sukkah* for God so that he can guard Israel. The qabbalists translated this idea into mystical terms, calling upon the seven sefirot to join the resident in his *sukkah*. God resides in the shade of the *sukkah* together with the Jew who fulfills the commandment.

It is fitting to close with a selection from the liturgy. The prayer *hashkiveinu*, the second blessing following the *shema* in the evening service, invokes the idea of a "*sukkah* of peace":

Cause us, our God, to lie down in peace, and awaken us to life, our King. *Spread over us the sukkah of your peace*, guide us with your good counsel. Save us for the sake of your name. Protect us, shield us from enemies, pestilence, sword, starvation and sorrow. Remove the the evil forces that surround us. *Hide us in the shadow (shade) of your wings*, for you, our God, are our guardian and deliverer; you are a gracious and merciful king. Guard our coming and our going for life and peace, now and always. Praised are you, Lord *who spreads his sukkah of peace over us*, over all his people Israel and over Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup>

The prayer asks God for protection at night and especially during sleep, when evil forces are most prone to act. At this vulnerable time God should spread a protective *sukkah* over the individual and shield him from all harmful forces. Safe in the shade of this "*sukkah* of peace," also called the shade of God's wings, he will not be harmed. God seems to inhabit the

"*sukkah* of peace" and watch over his people, just as the watchman inhabits the *sukkah* found in fields and watches over the crops. It is significant that the symbolism and experience of the ritual *sukkah* has been appropriated by the liturgy to serve as a general metaphor for divine protection.<sup>78</sup> Each night one prays to lie down in a "*sukkah* of peace," that the divine protection not be limited to the festival of *Sukkot* when actually sleeping in a *sukkah*. This use of the symbolism testifies to the power of the *sukkah* ritual. The shade of the *sukkah* provided such a consummate sense of God's protection, love, and presence that one hopes to have that experience each night of one's life.

## NOTES

1. A longer and more technical version of this article can be found in my forthcoming book, *The History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods* (Brown Judaica Series; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press), chapter 6. The following abbreviations and editions of rabbinic sources are used in the notes: m = Mishna; t = Tosefta; b = Babylonian Talmud; y = Palestinian Talmud; BaR = *Bamidbar Rabba* (traditional printing); BR = *Bereishit Rabba*, ed. J. Theodor and H. Albeck (Jerusalem, 1965 [1903–29]); DR = *Devarim Rabba*, ed. S. Lieberman (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1964); ER = *Seder Eliahu Rabba und Seder Eliahu Zuta (Tanna Debe Eliahu)*, ed. M. Ish-Shalom (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1969 [1904]); Mekhilta = *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael*, ed. H. Horovitz (Jerusalem, 1960); Mekhilta RSBY = *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai*, ed. J.N. Epstein and E.Z. Melamed (Jerusalem, 1955); MTeh = *Midrash Tehillim*, ed. S. Buber (Jerusalem, 1966 [Vilna, 1891]); PRK = *Pesiqta DeRav Kahana*, ed. B. Mandelbaum (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1987); ShR = *Shir HaShirim Rabba* (traditional printing); Sifra, ed. I. Weiss (New York, 1946 [Vienna, 1862]); Sifre Deut. = *Sifre Devarim*, ed. L. Finkelstein (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1979 [Berlin, 1940]); Sifre Num. = *Sifre 'al sefer bamidbar veSifre Zuta*, ed. H.S. Horovitz (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1966 [Leipzig, 1917]); SR = *Shmot Rabba*; SZ = *Sifre Zuta*—see *Sifre Num.*; Tan = *Tanhuma* (Berlin, 1927); TanB = *Tanhuma*, ed. S. Buber (Jerusalem, 1964); VR = *Midrash Vayiqra Rabba*, ed. M. Margoliot (Jerusalem, 1953–60).

2. *Sifra 'Emor* 17:11 (103a–b). This tradition appears several times in rabbinic literature, and some versions reverse the attributions such that R. Akiba advocates real *sukkot* and R. Eliezer the clouds of glory. Reversed attributions appear in bSuk 11b and *Mekhilta RSBY*, 33. Parallels to the *Sifra* appear in *Mekhilta Pisha* §14 (48), *Mekhilta Beshalah*, *petihta* (80), and *Mekhilta RSBY*, 47. The *Sifra* version is more reliable for several reasons. First, R. Eliezer often uses the term *mamash* ("real") in his interpretations. See *Sifre Deut.* §213 (246); *Mekhilta Nezigin* §8 (277) and bBQ 84a. And see Y. Gilat, *R. Eliezer Ben Hyrcanus—A Scholar Outcast* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1984), 68–82 on R. Eliezer's tendency toward literal interpretation. Second, Targum Onkelos and the other Aramaic targums translate *sukkot* as the clouds of glory. Targum Onkelos is generally consistent with Akiba's hermeneutics, which suggests that this was R. Akiba's interpretation. Most medieval writers slavishly follow the Babylonian Talmud and attribute the clouds of glory interpretation to R. Eliezer.

3. *Tan Bo* §9 (210); *ShR* 1:7; PRK, "Alternative Parsha," 457; Tur, 'Orah Hayyim, §625; Mordechai Jaffee, *Levush ha'fur*, §625.

4. In more technical language: For R. Eliezer the annual ritual *re-enacts* the exodus from Egypt. Just as the biblical Israelites resided in rudimentary shelters as they fled from Egypt, so subsequent generations re-enact that event and occupy a similar shelter. For R. Akiba the annual ritual does not *re-enact*, but rather *commemorates*, the exodus *sukkot*, the clouds of glory.



On re-enactment and commemoration see Joseph Stern, "Reference Modes in the Rituals of Judaism," *Religious Studies* 23 (1987), 109–28.

5. Exod 16:16; 33:8,10; Num 11:10, 16:27, 24:5; Deut 1:27, 5:27.

6. See Eliezer Mizrahi's supercommentary to Rashi's commentary to the Torah, Lev 23:43.

7. See *Beit Yosef*, comment to Tur, 'Orah Hayyim, §625.

8. Isa 4:5–6.

9. Exod 13:21–2, 14:19, 33:9–10, 40:34–38; Num 12:5, 14:14; Deut 31:15; Ps 78:14, 99:7; Neh 9:12, 19.

10. Exod 33:9–11; 34:5; Num 9:15–23, 11:25; 12:5–6, 14:14, 17:7; Deut 1:33, 31:15.

11. Lev 16:2; Num 11:25, 14:14. On Mt. Sinai God revealed himself to Moses in a cloud; Exod 34:5.

12. In other words, R. Akiba's interpretive method was *peshat*, not *derash*. Note that Rashi, in his commentary to the Torah, explains the term *sukkot* here as the clouds of glory, following R. Akiba. And Rashi's intention was to explain the "plain sense of the text" (*peshuto shel miqra*; see Rashi's comment to Gen 3:8.) See too Ramban's explanation of Rashi in his commentary to Lev 23:43. (This is not to say that this interpretation actually is the *peshat*, but that medieval commentators thought it was the *peshat*.)

13. On the "glory," see n. 22.

14. tSot 4:2 (Vienna manuscript). Cf. *Sifre Num.* §83 (79); *SZ* 10:33 (266); *Mekhila RSBY*, 47 to Exod 13:20; *Mekhila Beshalah*, *petihta* (81, the clouds are termed "clouds of glory" in line 17); *Bar* 19:22.

15. *SZ* 10:33 (266); *Tanhuma*, *Beshalah* §3 (110a).

16. *Mekhila Beshalah* §4 (102); *Mekhila RSBY*, 60–61. This idea may derive, in part, from Ps 105:39, "He spread a cloud for a screen" (*masakh*).

17. Exod 16:1–10 and Num 14:1–10 as interpreted in *Mekhila Vayasa* §2 (163) and *Mekhila RSBY*, 108 to Exod 16:10. And see *Bar* 16:21; *Yalqut Shimoni* §743; *TanB* 4:69; bSot 35a and L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909–38), 6:96, n. 538.

18. *Sifre Num.* §83 (79). See too *Mekhila RSBY*, 135 to Exod 18:27.

19. *Sifre Deut.* §296 (314). Cf. *PRK* 3:12 (49–50); *Mekhila RSBY*, 119 to Exod 17:8; targum to Song 2:15 and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:24.

20. *TanB* 5:41.

21. tSot 11:1. Cf. bRH 3a; *Bar* 19:20.

22. *Mekhila Bahodesh* §9 (236). Cf. tAr 1:10. *DR* 7:11 relates that the garments of the Israelites never wore out in the desert (Deut 8:4) because the cloud rubbed and whitened them.

23. The Bible does not use the term "clouds of glory," although the glory sometimes appears as a cloud: "the priests were not able to stand and perform the service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the House of the Lord" (1 Kgs 8:11). See Cf. Exod 24:15–16; 40:34; 1 Kgs 8:12–13 and 2 Chr 5:13–6:2. Rabbinic literature conflated these images into the "clouds of glory."

24. *Baraita D-Meleket Ha-Mishkan: Critical Edition with Introduction*, ed. R. Kirchner (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1989), 14.5 (218), *SZ* 10:33 (266), *TanB* 4:12–13, targum to Song 1:4. On the *shekhina*, see A.M. Goldberg, *Untersuchungen über die Vorstellung von der Shekhina in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), and especially pp. 91–99.

25. *SR* 45:4; see bSuk 5a, *TanB* 2:124, and targum to Song 3:1–2, where the Israelites search for the *shekhina* after the clouds of glory disappear.

26. *SZ* 11:10 (276).

27. E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols of the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953–68), 1:247 (see also 10:135).

28. *Mekhila RSBY*, 33; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Exod 13:20 and Num 33:5.

29. *Bar* 20:19, following Neh 9:18–20. In the targum to Song 2:6, the cloud that protected the people from below is compared to a nurse who carries a baby at her breast.

30. *Mekhila Beshalah* §4 (101). The translation follows D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 28 based on his forthcoming edition.

31. *ShR* 2:6. *Yalqut Shimoni*, *Shir Hashirim* §986 relates the verse to the clouds of glory: "His left hand is under my head (*Song* 2:6)—that means the clouds that surrounded Israel from above and below." Thus one source relates the verse to the *sukkah*, and a variant tradition to the clouds of glory.

32. The return of the clouds of glory in the world to come is a widespread motif. See *Mekhilta Pisha* §14 (48); *Mekhilta Beshalah*, *petihta* (80). Cf. *Mekhilta RSBY*, 47 to *Exod* 13:20; *BR* 48:10 (487). Clouds also carry eschatological overtones in the Bible through their connection to the Day of Judgment: *Ezek* 30:3, 38:9, *Joel* 2:2, *Zeph* 1:15, *Isa* 45:8.

33. *SR* 34:3.

34. *tSuk* 1:12–13; *mSuk* 1:9.

35. *tSuk* 1:12–13; *bSuk* 4b; *baraita*, *ySuk* 1:1, 51c. *mSuk* 1:5 and *tSuk* 1:2 explicitly state that the laws of *skhakh* do not pertain to the walls. Only R. Yoshia rules that the walls must provide more shade than sun, *bSuk* 7b.

36. *mSuk* chapters 1 and 2.

37. *Tosafot*, *bSuk* 2a, s.v. *ki*.

38. *Rashi*, *b8b*, s.v. 'amar. That shade is the essence of the *sukkah* is clear from its Aramaic translation, *metallata*, the regular term in the targums, which comes from the root *TLL*, shade.

39. *mSuk* 1:2; *Sifra 'Emor* 17:4 (102d).

40. *mSuk* 1:3, 2:1; *bSuk* 10b, 21b.

41. *mSuk* 1:2, *Sifra 'Emor* 17:4 (102d).

42. *mSuk* 1:6–7. Cf. the *baraitot*, *tSuk* 1:7, *bSuk* 14a–b and *bSuk* 14b which debate the maximal size of beams.

43. *mSuk* 1:4. Several formulations of this principle appear in the manuscripts.

44. This explanation follows *Rav*, *bSuk* 14a and *ySuk* 1:7, 52b.

45. For the same reason the *skhakh* should not be so thick that no light whatsoever can be perceived through it. See *Levush ha'fur*, §631:3.

46. *bSuk* 2a (*R. Zera*); *ySuk* 1:1, 51d (*R. Yohanan*).

47. *tSuk* 1:2; *bSuk* 7b.

48. *bSuk* 2a.

49. *mSuk* 1:4–5, *tSuk* 1:4–6.

50. *Nehemiah* 8:15 provides a partial description of the building of a *sukkah*. The people go to the mountainside and gather "leafy branches of olive trees, pine trees, myrtles, palms and [other] leafy trees to make booths." However, it is not stated exactly how these branches were used, whether for *skhakh* or for the walls or both. Moreover, the rabbis did not treat this verse as authoritative or they would have required that all five substances be used. See, however, *R. Yehuda's* opinion, *Sifra 'Emor* 17:10 (103a); *ySuk* 3:4, 53d and *Tosafot*, *bSuk* 37a, s.v. *vehavi'u*.

51. See Sylvia Powels, "The Samaritan Calendar and the Roots of Samaritan Chronology," *The Samaritans*, ed. Alan D. Crown (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988), p. 732 and Reinhard Pummer, *The Samaritans* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), p. 23 and the photographs of such sukkot, plates 39–41. The Samaritans thus dwell within a *sukkah*, but not in its shade.

52. *Jon* 4:5–9. Indeed, the ritual *sukkah* probably derives from the original function of *sukkot* as shelters in which guards of fields found respite from the hot sun.

53. *Gen* 19:8. Cf. *Isa* 16:3–4, *Jer* 48:45. See too Herbert Levine, "The Symbolic Sukkah in Psalms," *Prooftexts* 7 (1987), pp. 259–267.

54. *Isa* 30:2–3.

55. *Ps* 121:5–7.

56. *Ps* 17:8, 36:8, 57:2, 63:8; *Isa* 31:5, 49:2.

57. *Ps* 36:8. See too *Ps* 17:8, 57:2.

58. *VR* 1:2 (6), *BarR* 8:1. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan translates *Deut* 23:16, the prohibition against returning a runaway slave, as a prohibition against delivering a gentile who desires "to be under the shade of My *shekhina*" back to idolatry. According to *yTa* 3:2, 68a (= *ySot* 7:4, 21d), whoever performs good deeds merits to sit in the shade of God. See too *bAr* 32b.

59. *ER* §18 (100). Cf. *Deut* 1:31 and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.

60. Of course clouds provide shade, and the clouds of glory protected the Israelites from the sun.

61. *MTeh* 104:24 (447).

62. *yMeg* 3:7, 74b. The prooftext is Ps 36:8: "How precious is Your faithful care, O God! Mankind shelters in the shadow of your wings." Cf. *PRK* 16:1 (264); *RR* 5:4; *yTa* 4:1, 68a (= *ySot* 7:4, 21d).

63. *Ruth Rabba* 5:4. The midrash comments on Ruth 2:12: "May the Lord reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge."

64. Shade unambiguously symbolizes the presence of God in *Tan Vayaqhel* §7 (337). The midrash explains that Exod 37:1 specifies that Bezalel himself fashioned the ark (rather than delegating the task to another) because "there [in the ark] resides the shade of God, who contracts his presence (*shekhina*) there. On this account he was named *besalel* (*besel 'el* = in the shade of God), since he made the shade of God between the *keruvim*, as it says, *Then I will meet with you, and I will impart to you—from above the cover, from between the two keruvim that are on top of the Ark of the Pact—all that I will command you concerning the Israelite people* (Exod 25:22)." The most concentrated locus of God's presence, that which dwells in the ark, manifests itself as shade. In another version of the midrash, cited in M. Kasher, *Torah shelema* (Jerusalem: Hatchiyah, 1964), 21:51, Bezalel makes the shade of God, "in order that all Israel can dwell in his shade." Cf. *bBer* 55a, *Tan Vayaqhel* §3 (332–33).

65. The parallel between the laws of the *sukkah* and the clouds of glory periodically appears in medieval Jewish thought. For example, Mordechai Jaffee, *Levush ha'fur*, §626:1 explains that the *sukkah* must be built directly beneath the sky because the clouds were directly beneath the sky. And see *Bayyit Hadash* to Tur, 'Orah Hayyim, §625, who explains why we are not commanded to build seven *sukkot* corresponding to the seven clouds. He was troubled by the lack of *perfect* parallel between the halakha and the aggada, between the ritual object and its symbolism.

66. Comment to *bSuk* 2a, s.v. *amar*.

67. 'Arukh HaShulhan, 'Orah Hayyim, §695:5. The midrash he quotes is found in *ShR* 2:3.

68. *Sukkot* occurs but four days after the conclusion of Yom Kippur. It is also customary to begin building the *sukkah* immediately after Yom Kippur. See Isserles to *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Orah Hayyim, §624.

69. See too Bahya ben Asher (d. 1310), *Kad HaKemakh*, in *Kitvei Rabenu Bahye* ed. C. Chavel (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1969), p. 279: "Thus, whoever fulfills the commandment of the *sukkah* and enters it and turns his eyes toward the *skhakh* made for shade, he realizes that God is the shade of the people of Israel, and that He protects them as shade protects against the sun, as it is written, *The Lord is your guardian, the Lord is your shade at your right hand* (Ps 121:5) and it is further written, *I loved to sit in his shade* (Song 2:3)."

70. On the Zohar's conception of Sukkot, see I. Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, trans. David Goldstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 1248–1253.

71. Zohar, 3:255b.

72. Zohar 103a. See too Zohar 1:103b, 1:172b, 1:257b, 2:186b.

73. Zohar 2:186b. See too 3:256a.

74. Zohar 2:135a. See Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1249. In Zohar 3:256a the *shekhina* is identified directly with the *sukkah*: "The *shekhina*: that is the *sukkah*."

75. Zohar 3:255b. See too 3:103b.

76. Zohar 3:103b–104a. For translations and commentary see Lawrence Fine, "Kabbalistic Texts," *Back to the Sources*, ed. Barry Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 330–40; Daniel C. Matt, *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 148–52, 268–271 and Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 1305–1308.

77. The current liturgical custom concludes with this form of the blessing on Sabbaths and Festivals. On weekdays the ending is "Praised are you, Lord, eternal guardian of your people Israel."

78. Cf. *Bayyit Hadash* to Tur, 'Orah Hayyim, §625.

# *The Jews Are My Tahiti: R. B. Kitaj and the Subject of His Paintings*

## *An Interview with Commentary*

CLIVE SINCLAIR

IN 1891 GAUGUIN QUIT THE QUOTIDIAN, CROSSED the equator, and set up shop in the South Seas. Sitting on a sofa in his Chelsea studio Kitaj, the painter, says: "The Jews are my Tahiti."

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1932, Kitaj is also an exile; but his is an exile of the mind, a perennial state of dislocation, as he makes clear in his sketchy but seminal First Diasporist Manifesto of 1989 (which opens with a quote from Philip Roth, "The poor bastard had Jew on the brain").

Roth, incidentally, returned the compliment in *Operation Shylock*, wherein a character called Pipik preaches a creed called Diasporism. Anyway, it is this state of inhabiting two worlds, both Tahiti and Chelsea, that drives Kitaj's protean talent.

His public assertion of Jewishness is—like Schönberg's famous remark, "I have long since resolved to be a Jew. . . . I regard that as more important than my art"—a response to anti-Semitism, a gesture of solidarity. He sees himself as a "tribal remembrancer, wrestling with my Diasporic angel," and is fond of quoting Emil Fackenheim's 614th *mitzvah*, to the effect that Jews should not hand Hitler a posthumous victory by forgetting their heritage.

Actually Kitaj mentions the *mitzvot* because he is, at present, considering an "incredibly ambitious plan" (to use his own words). "I've been thinking about it for a long time," he continues, "and mean to do something very slowly about each of the 613 *mitzvot*. As you know they're separated into positive and negative ordinances. The earlier ones have to do with God and belief and so on, and I had to find a way into that subject, and that's how it came about that I began to look at representations of God. . . ."

This can be seen as simultaneously kosher and *treif*, unclean because it contravenes the second commandment that was instrumental—at least until the Haskalah—in preventing the development of any Jewish representational art. Kitaj must therefore draw upon Christian precedents for his

---

CLIVE SINCLAIR was born in London in 1948. He was educated at the University of East Anglia and the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is the author of four novels—two of which, *Blood Libels* and *Cosmetic Effects*, are published in the United States—and also two books of short stories and various works of criticism. He lives in St. Albans, to the North of London, with his son Seth.

example, from which it may be deduced that his Jewishness is a catholic business.

Some events, however, are unprecedented. Responding to the Holocaust, Chagall famously painted a crucified *ostjude*. Kitaj, on the contrary, has sought a specific iconography, a Jewish equivalent of the cross. Consequently he produced about eight pictures relating to the Jewish Passion, each of which was marked with a crematorium chimney which could also be seen as a coffin.

"I was living a comfortable, warm happy American boyhood at the time, so I was very wary of dealing with this subject," says Kitaj. "All I can deal with is the shadow of it, only what I know, that is what I read in books and what people tell me."

"For me, books are what trees are for the landscape painter," Kitaj has written elsewhere.

His images may derive from the older masters (although more modern auteurs, like John Ford the movie director, whose amalgam of myth and landscape goes straight to Kitaj's American heart, should not be omitted), but his ideas and his philosophy come directly from those beloved books.

At first his heroes were the champions of modernism: Joyce, Pound, and Eliot, diasporists all, even the anti-Semites among them. Indeed Eliot's fragmented, allusive, footnoteable poetry, full of dark secrets, we now know, still stands as a paradigm for Kitaj's own rich brew.

These days, however, the household gods are Jewish, secular saints such as Kafka and Benjamin. This transformation occurred at the same time (the late 1970s) as Kitaj's decision—prompted by fellow artist Sandra Fisher, now his wife—to give more prominence to the intimate and innate skill of drawing, both with charcoal and pastel.

He drew from life, but his real models were Cezanne and Degas, Matisse and Picasso; ever alert, ever curious, forever reinventing their art. Thus he rebuilt his *Weltanschauung* and his talent simultaneously.

However, being a draughtsman *sans pareil* was not sufficient for Kitaj. Seeing the fun his buddy Roth was having with his fictional alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman, he dreamed up Joe Singer, the exemplary Jew.

"I've always envied novelists for being able to invent characters," says Kitaj, "and so I put Joe Singer in picture after picture. Daumier was the only artist who seems to have done it before, that great figure of Ratapoil; that agitator with the goatee and the kind of crumpled top hat. Joe Singer was like that for me. In the new show at the Marlborough you'll see another character whom I call Josephine Singer. I don't know if she's a mother, or a sister, or a wife or what she is. . . . Then it came to me, after the painting was done. I realized, it was staring me in the face and I didn't know it . . . 'My God!

Josephine the Mouse Singer!" I swear it came to me after the whole thing was done, that Kafka had written this gorgeous story with that name."

One week after the Marlborough show opened, Kitaj's great retrospective commenced at the Tate. Now his work is in Los Angeles at the County Museum, with the Metropolitan Museum in New York the next stop (February through May, 1995). There you'll find a painting, "The Wedding," which amounts to a curriculum vitae; a marriage of art and Judaism; of art and life. In short it records Kitaj's own marriage to Sandra Fisher at the Bevis Marks Synagogue.

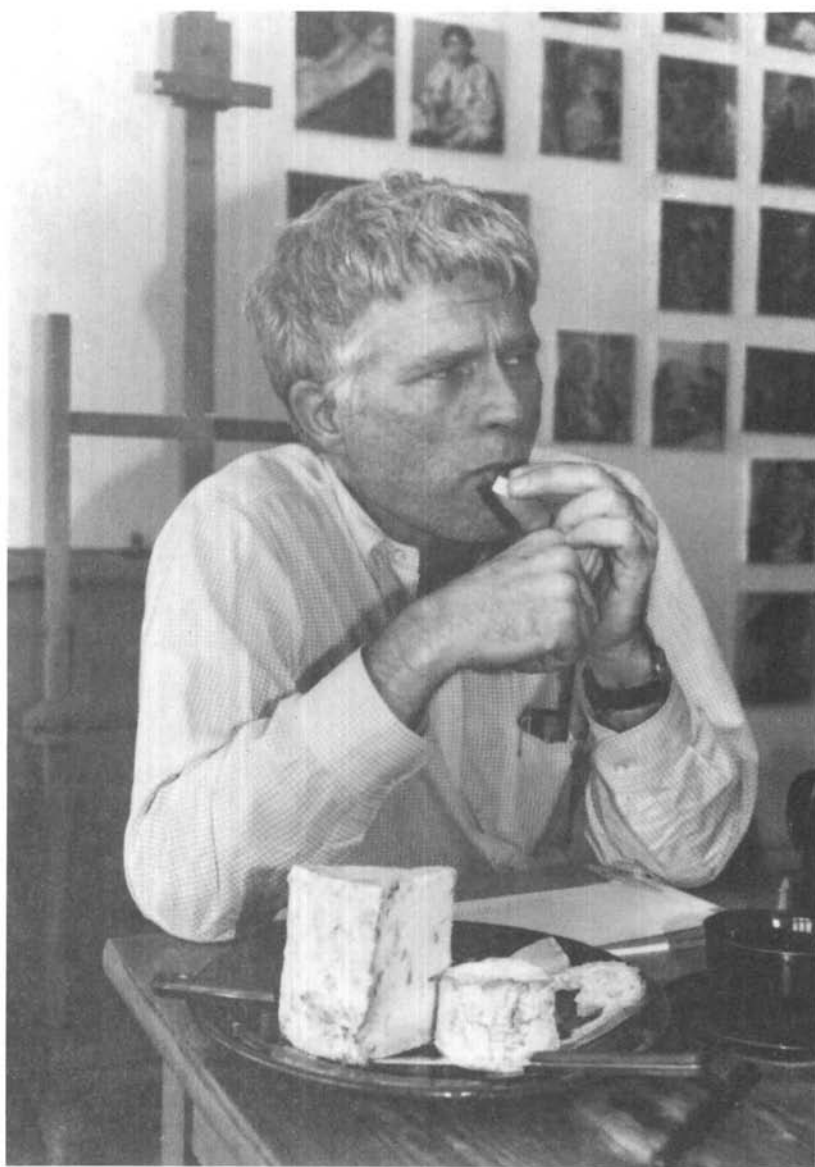
The union was blessed not only by the resident rabbi but by the ghost of Rembrandt, for the synagogue was founded by his friend and patron, Menasseh ben Israel. Present, also, were many of Kitaj's own peers.

"I told the rabbi," he tells me, "that my oldest painter friend is Hockney and he's a Christian. Is that all right? Can he be the best man? And the rabbi said, 'Yes, that's fine, we don't mind that at all, but a Jew has to go and get the bride out of the back room.' So Hockney was the best man. Then I got a lot of Jewish friends together—Freud, and Auerbach, and Kossoff were under the *hupah*. It was crazy. There was Hockney with his dyed blond hair, and Freud with his paint-stained corduroy trousers, who claimed he'd never been in a synagogue in his life.

"It was such great theatre that I knew I would want to paint it. Even so it took me some while before I got started. Then I had the painting in my studio for five years. I like to keep a painting alive as long as I can. Finally I didn't finish it so much as finish with it and I gave it to the Tate.

"I thought it belonged in London because all the wonderful London painters were there. I don't know if there's ever been a moment when there's been so many interesting painters working in London. The sun is just shining here for a while, as it shone on Paris for 100 years."





*R. B. Kitaj (b. 1932). Photo: Lee Friedlander.*



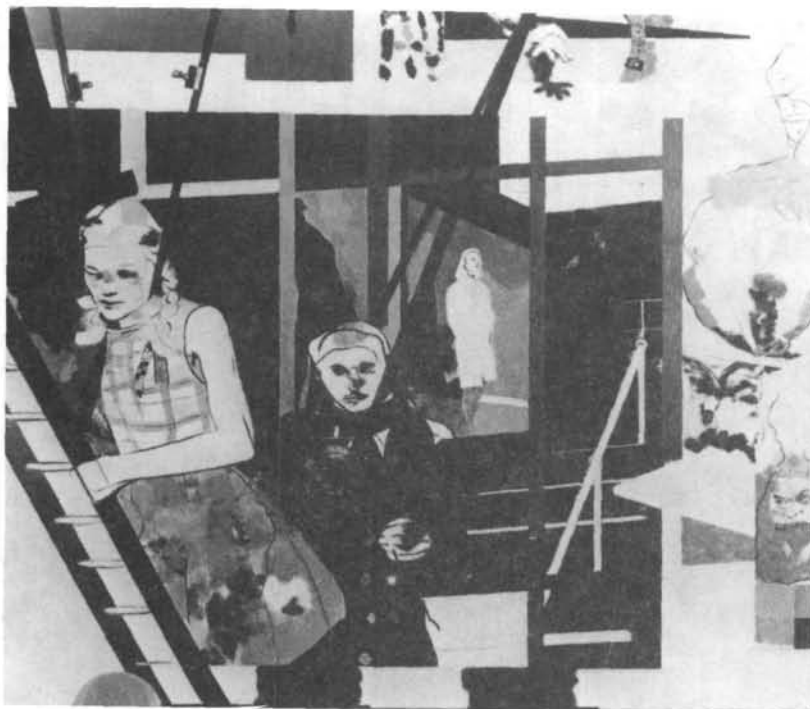
Tate Gallery. Presented by the artist, 1993.

*The Wedding, 1989-93. Oil on canvas.*



Tate Gallery. Purchased 1985.

*Cecil Court, London WC2 (The Refugees), 1983-84. Oil on canvas.*



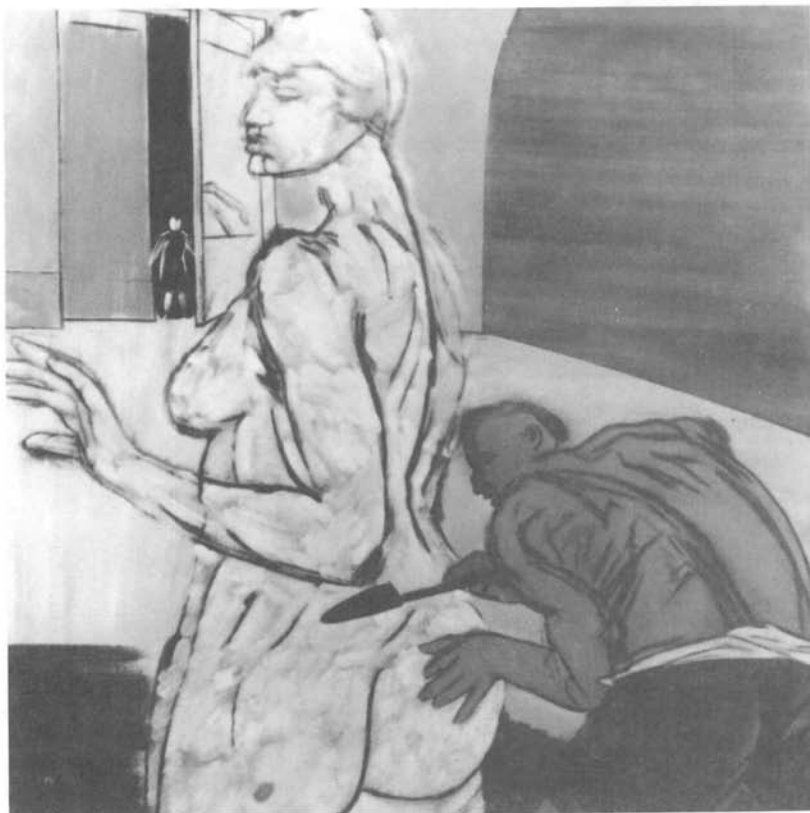
*Walter Lippmann, 1966. Oil on canvas.*

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. Gift of Seymour H. Knox, 1967.



Tate Gallery. Purchased 1980.

*The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, 1960. Oil and collage on canvas.*



Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd.

*The Sculptor*, 1992. Oil on canvas.



## A Postscript

As a parting gift I left Kitaj one of my own books, and unwittingly made a minor faux pas. For I had inscribed it to "Ron." "I'd rather you didn't call me that," said Kitaj, "please stick to my surname in future." I suppose there was a touch of hubris in that response, but surely nothing that demanded nemesis.

The London art critics obviously thought differently. They attacked the show with a personal venom that was designed to break the spirit, if not the heart. Among other things they were offended by Kitaj's habit of attaching a midrash to his paintings, even though he protested that his interpretations were not necessarily definitive.

Indeed. By way of a postscript I wish to demonstrate how a particular painting has acquired manifold meanings. It is called "The Sculptor," and was reproduced on the invitation to the Tate exhibition. It shows the eponymous artist hard at work on a female nude, which the viewer sees in three-quarters profile. Meanwhile, in the far distance of the studio a tiny figure watches from an open door.

When the invitation arrived my wife was still alive. She glanced at the picture and exclaimed, "Why, that's exactly where the surgeon took his scalpel to me!" Fran was right. The sculptor's knife was poised above his creation's left buttock, precisely at the point where the osteosarcoma had destroyed her sacrum.

By the time I visited Kitaj, towards the end of May, my wife bore more resemblance to the ghostly figure in the doorway. I mentioned this personal reading to Kitaj and his own wife. What could they say except express their sympathy? At the time, I must confess, I thought them blessed.

Needless to say, the invitation also contained Kitaj's own explanation of the canvas. He imagined "a dying artist working on a larger than life sculpture of his dead wife in order to recall their marriage." The figure in the doorway is described as "the spectre of the wife."

Sandra Fisher died suddenly in mid-September, shortly after the closure of the exhibition. Fran was 46, she was 47. I do not know if Kitaj now regards the painting as horribly prophetic, as a macabre thing, but I cannot see it as such. It is a memento mori for me too, but it also speaks of the brave but unequal struggle against death and oblivion. It is, to borrow a phrase from Kafka, a memory come to life.

NOVEMBER 1994



# ***Sarah's Silence: A Newly Discovered Commentary on Genesis 22 by Rashi's Sister***

***Introduced and Presented with Additional Commentary***

**D V O R A Y A N O W<sup>1</sup>**

THE FOLLOWING COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL story known as “the binding of Isaac,” which is published here for the first time, was recently discovered in the *geniza* of the old synagogue in Troyes, France, a mid-sized city southeast of Paris, on the Seine River. It is worth noting that a *geniza*—meaning, literally, “hiding place”—is an out of the way space in a synagogue, typically an attic or an oversized crawl space, in which prayer books and other sacred writings that are falling apart or disintegrating are placed for storage. Such objects retain their sacredness and so are not thrown out or burned, although they may be buried in a cemetery. Other, non-sacred writings have occasionally found their way into *genizahs*.

Written on a scrap of paper, this commentary was stuck inside what appears to be the accounts ledger for a vineyard. Carbon 14 dating has established the book to be about 900 years old. Because of the age of the ledger, its source, and the inscription on the first page, scholars surmise it is the bookkeeping for Rashi's vineyard, and that the bookkeeper was none other than Rashi's sister. The handwriting on the scrap of paper matches that of the ledger, leading most scholars who have been consulted to conclude that she is the author of the midrash.

Rashi—Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac—is even today considered one of the foremost commentators on the Bible. Little is known of his life aside from his extensive commentaries. He was born in 1040 into a family of scholars (some say poor, others, wealthy); grew up in Troyes, a city in the region

---

DVORA YANOW is Associate Professor of Public Administration at California State University, Hayward, where she teaches courses in public policy and organizational studies and writes about the ways myths, metaphors, and built spaces communicate policy and organizational meanings. She “discovered” the existence of Rashi's sister while seeking to account for Sarah's missing voice in the Akedah story for a dvar torah on VaYera. She notes that Shakespeare's sister was imagined into existence in 1929 by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the author of this essay claims to have discovered this midrash, the possibility exists that the midrash and Rashi's sister are her inventions.

called Champagne; traveled to Worms, south of Mainz, Germany, in the Rhine Valley, to study at the yeshiva of Rabbi Jacob ben Yakar; and then returned to Troyes, where he raised three daughters and kept the family's vineyards which he had inherited. Rashi died in 1105. His commentaries on the Bible are well known, and his sons-in-law and grandsons also became Bible scholars. But little has been known of the business side of his life until now.

Even less is known of Rashi's sister. In fact, until now her existence was undocumented. But the inscription on the inside of the ledger says, "Ci est le libre que Salomon me dict fabre, par sa sor"—in rough translation: This being the book which Solomon asked me to keep, by his sister. Her name is not recorded anywhere in the ledger; and, as with Shakespeare's sister, her writings were unknown to scholars until the discovery of this commentary stuck between the pages of the vineyard's accounts. We might surmise that she worked on it when business was slow, or when her brother was out inspecting the fields, or perhaps while he was working on his own commentaries. What we can tell from the account book and this midrash is that not only was she schooled in bookkeeping, but she also was familiar with the Talmud and existing commentaries on the Bible, a most unusual accomplishment for a woman of that era.

Rashi's sister's commentary has a contemporary ring. She looks at the passage in *Genesis*, chapter 22 in which Abraham takes his son Isaac to sacrifice and asks, in effect, "Where is Sarah while this is going on? Where is Isaac's mother, Abraham's wife?" She directs our attention to the fact that in the whole of the narrative about Abraham rising early in the morning, taking his son (which son?) Isaac and a donkey loaded with sacrificial provisions but without the literal sacrificial lamb, and setting out on a three day journey, Sarah's voice is nowhere to be heard.

Perhaps we know nothing of Rashi's sister because her questions were too feminist for their time, as they may even be for ours. While we can regret the loss of such commentaries from a woman's perspective, we may celebrate the discovery of this one. I am pleased to be able to present it here, rendered in modern English (with the help of Everett Fox's translation of *Genesis*),<sup>2</sup> and will append my own comments where it breaks off.

### **Sarah's Silence: A Midrash**

[A commentary on Genesis, chapter 22, the story of the "Akeda," the binding of Isaac, in which Abraham, obedient to God's instructions, rises early one morning, takes his son Isaac, travels for three days to Mt. Moriya, and prepares to sacrifice the boy, only to be saved by God's angel who shows him a ram trapped in the bush:]

But where is Sarah's voice in this story? This silence is troubling: would a mother, knowing that her husband was about to lead their son to the sacrificial altar, not get up in the morning to say goodbye—let alone plead or argue with her husband about the foolishness of such a plan? Not to mention that this particular son was so long in coming, and at such potential cost to the physical health of a 90-year-old woman. Are we to understand that Abraham didn't tell her his plans? If so, what model of marital relations does this present for us?

Let us put this silence in context. It is not a character trait: Sarah is not the silent type, by and large, nor does Abraham hesitate to discuss other matters with her when he is facing trouble or to tell her what to do. For example, when they headed to Egypt (Genesis 12:11–13) and again when facing King Avimelech in G'rar for the first time (Gen. 20:2), Abraham tells Sarah to say that she is his sister rather than his wife, explaining that this will save his life. (As his wife, she is his property; a man wanting her for his own would have to kill her husband to free her for the taking. As Abraham's sister, there is no problem of acquisition.) Although the text doesn't indicate that she spoke on these two occasions, both survived the journey and continued on together, and we may thus understand that she followed Abraham's instructions and so presented herself to any who asked.

Or, in chapter 16, Sarai (her name then) discusses her barrenness with Avram (his earlier name), brings her handmaid Hagar to him for child-bearing, and then goes to Avram to discuss Hagar's insolence toward her. The text includes nothing that would suggest that she is shy about speaking with her husband. On the contrary, Avram listens to her in the first instance and accepts her offer of Hagar, and later they appear to discuss which of them is responsible for Hagar's management.

Sarah is an even fuller presence in chapters 18–21: she stands at the tent entrance when Abraham plays host to his three angelic visitors, she actively listens to the men's conversation, and she laughs. She laughs in various ways: about the idea of knowing sexual pleasure once more at her advanced age, about the idea of getting pregnant and bearing a child at the age of 90, and later about what others will say about her late pregnancy. And she denies her laughter as well. She also interacts directly with other men: Avimelech speaks to her personally about his gift of a silver coin face-piece to indicate her wifely status (20:16). She returns to Abraham to complain about Ishmael's taunting of Isaac and to demand that he exile Hagar and her son. This and her laughter suggest the active presence of a full participant in home and outside life. How then can we explain her silence throughout chapter 22? (And her death—her eternal silence—follows immediately at the beginning of the next chapter.)

Before suggesting a possible answer, we should note that Sarah's is not the only silence that may be seen in this story. Others have noted Abraham's silence with respect to God: his is silent obedience to God's will, leading some to speculate not that God is testing Abraham, as the text says, but that Abraham is testing God, to see if God is really going to put

*SILENCE: "The speech of the book comes from a certain silence, a matter which it endows with form, a*

him through this ordeal. One may also argue that Isaac is also silent: although he finally asks his father where the sacrificial lamb is, he does so only after two days of silent travel, if we take the text on its face.

But although these are silences, the voices of both Abraham and Isaac are present in the story. Abraham twice answers, "Here I am," once to God, once to his son; he and Isaac engage in conversation about the sacrifice. But Sarah's voice is nowhere to be heard; she is not even mentioned by name. Why is Sarah not present in this text? Would a father take a child, so long awaited, off to sacrifice without telling the child's mother, his wife? At the beginning of chapter 18, Abraham gives Sarah a recipe and tells her to bake bread for their three visitors; why doesn't he ask her to bake or cook or pack for his three day trip to Mt. Moriya?

Some have suggested that Sarah is not present in the text because Abraham didn't tell her his plans: he was embarrassed, he didn't want to provoke a fight: he knew she would object. That he arose "early in the morning," as the text says, supports an argument that he wanted to sneak out of camp without waking her and attracting her attention. Surely, however, the noise of saddling his donkey, calling to his two helpers, splitting wood for the sacrifice, and riding out of camp would have awakened her, even if she were sleeping in a separate tent.

Others have suggested that he did tell her and that this is precisely why she is silent: Sarah is in a state of shock over Abraham's intentions, perhaps even at his unwillingness to listen to her about why he shouldn't carry out God's command. Some see this shock as the reason for her death at the beginning of the subsequent chapter (Gen. 23:2).

These various explanations of Sarah's silence and observations of Abraham and Isaac's

*ground on which it traces a figure. Thus the book is not self-sufficient, it is necessarily accompanied by a certain absence, without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include a consideration of this absence."*  
*Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production, chapter 15.*

silences are made from Abraham's point of view. How might we explain these events in the context of Sarah's lived experience?

At the beginning of chapter 21 Sarah becomes pregnant and gives birth. When Isaac is 8 days old, he is circumcised by his father (v. 4). I propose that the reason Sarah is silent in chapter 22, the sacrifice story, is because the events are unfolding in her dream in a delayed reaction to the circumcision—a dream spawned perhaps by drinking too much at the “drinking-feast” (*mishteh*) that Abraham made on the day of his son's weaning (v. 8) (perhaps what also caused Ishmael to taunt Isaac [v. 9]), or simply by her maternal response to the circumcision, which she felt as the sacrifice of her son. Sarah doesn't speak because in her dream she is working out her emotional reactions to the circumcision.

There is perhaps a second theme which Sarah is also working out in this dream. Whereas the Creation story (Gen. 2:24) tells us that a man will leave his father and mother's house and cleave to his wife, in Sarah's case (as with the other matriarchs) she leaves her father's house and homeland and follows Abraham, “roaming” (20:13, *hit'u*) around the countryside from Haran to Canaan, from Shechem to the Negev to Egypt, to Bethel and Ai and Hebron, to the Negev again and G'rar and Beer Sheva and, finally, to Hebron once more, where she dies. In her dream, Sarah is dealing not only with her feelings about her son's circumcising, but also with her grief at being uprooted—not only from her parents' home, her homeland, her *landsleit* and friends and the old neighborhood, but also from a long list of places of residence, each of which she thought would be “home” and each of which turned out, instead, to be an interim arrangement.

And so, the father takes the infant son and sets out on a three-days' long journey, puts him

*CIRCUMCISION:  
To what  
extent is brit  
milah a  
substitute for  
sacrifice?  
Jewish  
sources  
insist on the  
Akedah, the  
binding;  
Christian  
and Muslim  
traditions  
imagine it as  
sacrifice.*

on a table, takes a knife, and performs the . . . not sacrifice but circumcision. Sarah weaves the two “journeys” together in her dream: her wanderings from her land, her birthplace, her father’s house (why have the commentators only noted the meaning of this uprooting for Abraham?); and the 8-day-old son’s journey from the bedroom, from the crib, from the arms of his mother, to the sandak in the living room who will hold his legs down, awaiting the mohel’s knife. How many mothers, waiting nervously, anxiously, angrily in a back room, have experienced this act as the binding and sacrifice of their sons?! Here she has protected her son from Ishmael’s taunting, only to see him placed in mortal danger, and by her husband, his father, no less. Sarah is silent in the dream as she watches the circumcision-sacrifice take place, as many mothers have silently complied with an act which goes against their maternal instincts.

The text provides us with at least one explicit clue that Sarah has an active interior life, which provides grounds for the plausibility of such a dream-state. At the beginning of Genesis 18, when the angel-visitor tells Abraham that by this time next year, Sarah will give birth, she laughs. But she does not laugh out loud: verse 12 tells us that she laughed “to” herself or “inside” herself. The angel “hears” her laughter, and we are told that she denies it (v. 15), although he responds, in effect, “But in fact you did”—another example of her interaction with a strange “man.” This foreshadows the possibility for the later, lengthier, internally-conceived action of the circumcision-sacrifice dream.

Seeing this drama as a dream unfolding in Sarah’s mind explains not only the general problem of her silence, but also at least one problem in the text. God says to Abraham: “Take your son, your only one, the one you

*ONLY ONE: What is confusing for Abraham is self-evident to Sarah. Thus the story may be*



love—Isaac.” From Abraham’s point of view, this is a problematic statement, as noted in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 89). *seen as imagined from her perspective.*

GOD SAYS (in the text):	ABRAHAM REPLIES (in our imagined conversation):
Take your son	—but I have two sons!
Your only one	—but I have two!
The one you love	—but I love them both!
Isaac.	

And we can imagine Abraham thinking, “Oh, *that one*.”

But from Sarah’s point of view, this is not a problematic text: she has only one son. In fact, she doesn’t even call Ishmael by name, referring to him throughout as “the son of that servant” (*ben ha’ama hazot*), while calling Isaac “my son” (“because he won’t inherit, that servant’s son, with *my* son, with Isaac”—Gen. 21:10). For her, “take your son” is self-evident in its reference, and the subsequent phrases only emphasize her connection to that son in her mind.

Even Abraham’s silence may be explained from Sarah’s point of view. She projects her own silence as a mother in the face of her son’s circumcision-sacrifice onto her husband in the face of God’s command. That is, in Sarah’s dream, Abraham in his obedient silence to God acts out her own obedience to her husband’s choice to circumcise their son.

Perhaps Sarah’s sacrifice-dream is the working out of other themes: her travail during 9 months of an aged pregnancy, culminating in her fears that Isaac will be “sacrificed” by a grueling birth, or that his passage to life (was she in labor for three days?) would end with her death (and she dies immediately following the akeda “passage”). But her absence from this text needs to be noted and addressed from a point of view that reflects *her* lived experience. What . . .

How might we assess this commentary for the contemporary reader? The midrash accomplishes two things: it focuses on the absence of Sarah's voice at a time when we might have expected her to be most vocal; and it offers us an explanation for that silence, in the form of Sarah's dream. Yet in contemplating the contemporary meaning of this midrash, I think we also need to note that Sarah's absence from the text has generally not been a subject for traditional commentators or contemporary novelists and most sermon-givers, who have found it sufficient to explore how a father could contemplate killing his son in order not to deny his God. We need to ask, then, not only what we learn from Sarah's silence, but also what we learn from traditional practices of silence *about* her silence. That is, let us ask not only, Why was Sarah silent? but also, Why has her silence not attracted attention? and, What do we learn from both these silences? It is possible that the traditional interpretations and uses of the text, with Sarah's silence unremarked, have perpetuated problems in the Jewish community, and these become visible only once Sarah's silence is problematized.

The traditional Friday night blessing of girl-children wishes for us to become like our Mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. One of the messages of Sarah's silence is that girls growing to adult women need to be silent to be virtuous like their mothers. This silence may begin for adult women with the circumcision of their sons—even though many feel, as my mother confessed 39 years after the fact, angry or, as a woman I overheard some months ago, as if she were being asked to sacrifice her son—but it may not end there.

One such silence has grown around the tradition of “shlom bayit”—keeping peace in the family household. For the sake of keeping peace, of shlom bayit, women who have suffered physical and mental abuse at the hands of their husbands have been told—by family members and by rabbis in their pastoral role—to go back home, to redouble their efforts to be “nice,” to be silent. It is a double silence: not only are the abused women to be silent, but the Jewish community as a whole has, until recently, kept silent about the incidence of wife abuse among Jews. Do Sarah's silence and the community's silence about her silence also account for silences on the existence of incest in Jewish families?

Many women report having difficulty with prayer, especially when praying is seen as carrying on a conversation with God. Sarah, our Mother, doesn't converse with God's angel-messenger. Unlike Abraham, who “negotiates” with God over the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Sarah's voice is not heard in direct interchange with God or God's representative. Changing the gender language of the liturgy, wherein God is referred to by female nouns and pronouns, may not be sufficient to overcome the lessons traditionally learned from Sarah's silence, especially

when she figures in opposition to an Abraham who has direct conversations with God. Even in the haftara reading associated with Sarah's story on Rosh Hashana (I Samuel 1–2:10), when Hanna prays to God with only her lips moving, her voice is not heard. Compounding the problem, Eli the Cohen takes her for a drunk. The cry of *kol isha*—the prohibition against a “woman’s voice” sounding louder than a man’s during prayers—has not only silenced many women during prayer; even in egalitarian minyanim, many women struggle to overcome a strongly embedded inhibition against reciting prayers in full voice, let alone leading them. But has it not also led, in part, to the current efforts in Israel to make it illegal for women to pray collectively, out loud, at Jerusalem’s Western Wall?

The story of Abraham’s obedience to God and his apparent willingness to sacrifice his son takes a central place in Jewish theology and liturgy. Everett Fox, in his commentary on chapter 22, echoes rabbinical acclaim when he calls the story a Biblical “masterpiece,” the “paradigmatic narrative of the entire book” of Genesis. Moreover, the Akeda (the Hebrew name for the sacrifice story) together with Genesis 21 constitute the traditional Torah readings for the two days of Rosh Hashana. In chapter 21, 90-year-old Sarah gives birth to Isaac. Later, after watching his brother Ishmael taunt him, she tells Abraham to expel Ishmael and his mother, Hagar; Abraham complies, and God’s angel, finding them out of water in the desert, shows Hagar a well and promises that her son will be the father of a great nation. Isaac’s birth and the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael (chapter 21) is the traditional reading for the first day of Rosh Hashana; the Akeda (chapter 22) is traditionally read on the second day.

But the centrality of the Akeda is enacted even further by the Reform movement by shifting this reading from the second day of Rosh Hashana to the first day. The Reform movement’s justification for this reversal has been that the near-sacrifice of Isaac is the most gripping story in the Torah. Since most Reform Jews attend only first day Rosh Hashana services, this is the story the Reform rabbinical association has chosen for them to hear, both as text and as recommended sermon subject material.

Highlighting the Akeda passage for Rosh Hashana reading and proclaiming it as the reading that should be heard by the whole community, while relegating the Sarah/Isaac/Yishmael/Hagar story to the generally unattended second day service, reinforces the man’s centrality to the community, to prayer, to conversations with God—the centrality, in short, of the male experience. In effect it marginalizes the female experience of giving birth, of jealousy, of maternal protectiveness, of barrenness, of concern about others’ joy or derision, of connecting with God through laughter—all those *other* human themes which are the emotional heart of the story of 90-year-old Sarah giving birth and its aftermath. Why could not the readings

at least be alternated every other year, thus giving both experiences equal weight.

Could it be, in part, that this passage occupies such a central place in our communal theology to reinforce the silences of all our Sarahs—beginning with their husbands' performance of the circumcision rites and extending to other community practices? Personally, I have always found the "other" reading, about Sarah giving birth in doubt and laughter and contending with Hagar by ousting her, much more compelling than the story of Isaac's near-sacrifice. Seeing the sacrifice as taking place in Sarah's dream-state may or may not solve the textual problem of Sarah's silence. But this and other silences must be made to speak.<sup>3</sup>

## NOTES

1. *Acknowledgments*: The author thanks members of the Palo Alto Egalitarian Minyan, in particular Amy Eilberg, Ken Fromm, Shulamit Magnus, David Rosenhan, and Tom Schwarz, for their responses to the original torah discussion and Murray Baumgarten, Sheila Baumgarten, Ari Cartun, Mishael Caspi, Carl Perkins, Howard Schwartz, and Helen Vogel Yanow for their comments on earlier written versions. My thanks also to John O. Jordan for marginalia.

2. *In the Beginning* (New York: Schocken Press, 1983).

3. In a wonderful Rosh Hashana sermon at Stanford in 1992, Professor Howard Schwartz noted that Abraham talks with God about a subject in the public sphere—that is, about the future of the two cities—whereas his voice is silent in the private sphere concerning the future of his son. Noting also the absence of Sarah's voice from this discussion, Schwartz asks whether this symbolizes contemporary American men's difficulty in talking about their personal, private pain with the women they love. His is an exception to the general sermonic silence on the subject of Sarah's silence in this text.

Savina J. Teubal, in *Sarah the Priestess* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 1984), offers the akeda story as an example of the patriarchs' religion overtaking the matriarchs' Goddess-centered religion. This is an intriguing line of inquiry, although one can still explore the ramifications of Sarah's silence without having to engage Goddess theories. The poet Eleanor Wilner, for example, writes a midrash-in-poem suggesting that Sarah, not Abraham, was commanded to sacrifice Isaac. Wilner seems to be asking, What if Sarah had awakened Isaac to give him a choice of action, and what if Isaac had fled? ("Sarah's Choice," excerpted in *The Reconstructionist* LV:1, September/October 1989, pp. 16–17). I thank Rabbi Carl Perkins for bringing this to my attention.

# Ma Oz?

LEORA SMITH

Uncle Leo ventured past us  
to the land beyond the  
first verse.

Singing deep into Ma Oz Tzur  
in the den he passed us  
Judaism.

He passed us childhood gifts  
Germany, a short stop in France,  
England, Panama, or Shanghai,  
past strangers.  
He took us to New York  
To Delaware  
To Chicago  
Past the Mississippi  
California . . .

And on  
to the Promised Land  
beyond the first verse of  
Ma Oz Tzur.

---

LEORA B. SMITH is a biologist, wife, and mother of two children. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in cellular physiology (1992) and is currently a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the department of Physiology and Biophysics. She has studied poetry with two of Israel's leading poets, Dan Pagis and Yehuda Amichai. Her poetry has been included in an anthology of poetry about Israel, *Without a Single Answer: Poems on Contemporary Israel*, edited by Elaine Starkman and Leah Schweitzer (Berkeley: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1990), and she has also published several papers in professional biological journals.

## *Mother Tongue*

My womb spoke to me  
and bade me, speak Yiddish.  
Though I opened my mouth  
I could not speak.

My womb spoke to me  
and bade me, speak German.  
When I opened my mouth  
I choked.

My womb spoke  
and bade me speak to you.  
I opened my mouth and  
spoke.

## *The Cycle of Names*

I.

In my luggage  
I carried dirt.

The dry dust risen  
in the heat clung  
to my pants  
to my hands and feet  
to my mind.

Not gold,  
Jerusalem dust  
of languages  
of smells  
of centuries.

II.

I carried dust  
in my luggage.

Mud from my  
Grandfather's grave.

I clung to my small  
daughter,  
in the rain.

III.

In my luggage  
I carry the dust  
of voices.

In my arms  
I carry my son.

On my tongue  
I carry  
Names.



# *Germany's Vanishing Holocaust Monuments*

JAMES E. YOUNG

A NOTORIOUS NAZI LEADER ONCE SAID THAT WHEN he heard the word "culture" he reached for his gun. Now when good Germans hear the word "Nazi" they invariably reach for their culture. It is almost as if the only guarantee against the return of this dreaded past lies in its constant aesthetic sublimation—in the art, literature, music, and, finally, in the monuments by which the Nazi era is simultaneously recalled and contained in Germany today.

On the one hand, no one takes their memorials more seriously than the Germans. Competitions are held almost monthly across the "Fatherland" for new memorials against war and fascism, or for peace; or to mark a site of destruction, deportation, or a missing synagogue; or to remember a lost Jewish community. Students devote their summers to concentration camp archaeology at Neuengamme, excavating artifacts from another, crueler age. Or they take up hammer and nails to rebuild a synagogue in Essen, or to build a monument at the site of Dachau's former satellite camp at Landsberg. Brigades of young Germans once again report dutifully to Auschwitz, where they repair dilapidated exhibition halls, tend shrubs around the barracks, and hoe weeds from the no-man's-land strip between formerly electrified fences. No less industrious than the generations preceding them, German teenagers now work as hard at constructing memorials as their parents did in rebuilding the country after the war, as their grandparents did in building the Third Reich itself.

Nonetheless, Holocaust memorial-work in Germany today remains a tortured, self-reflective, even paralyzing preoccupation. Every monument, at every turn, is endlessly scrutinized, explicated, and debated. Artistic, ethical, and historical questions occupy design juries to an extent unknown in other countries. Germany's ongoing "*Denkmal-Arbeit*" simultaneously displaces and constitutes the object of memory. Though some might see such absorption in the process of memorial-building as an evasion of memory, it may also be true that the surest engagement with memory lies in its perpetual irresolution. In fact, the best German memorial to the Fascist

---

JAMES E. YOUNG is Professor of English and Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is the author of *The Texture of Memory* (Yale University Press, 1993) and *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (1988). This essay is adapted from a talk delivered at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all—but simply the never-to-be resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name, and to what end. Instead of a fixed figure for memory, the debate itself—perpetually unresolved amid ever-changing conditions—might be enshrined.

Given the state-sponsored monument's traditional function as self-aggrandizing locus for national memory, the essential, nearly paralyzing ambiguity of German memory comes as no surprise. For traditionally, the state-sponsored memory of a national past aims to affirm the righteousness of a nation's birth, even its divine election. The matrix of a nation's monuments emplots the story of ennobling events, of triumphs over barbarism, and recalls the martyrdom of those who gave their lives in the struggle for national existence—who, in the martyrological refrain, died so that a country might live. In assuming the idealized forms and meanings assigned this era by the state, memorials tend to concretize particular historical interpretations. They suggest themselves as indigenous, even geological outcroppings in a national landscape; in time, such idealized memory grows as natural to the eye as the landscape in which it stands. Indeed, for memorials to do otherwise would be to undermine the very foundations of national legitimacy, of the state's seemingly natural right to exist.

While the victors of history have long erected monuments to remember their triumphs, and victims have built memorials to recall their martyrdom, only rarely does a nation call upon itself to remember the victims of crimes it has perpetrated. Where are the national monuments to the genocide of Native Americans, to the millions of Africans enslaved and murdered, to the Kulaks and peasants starved to death by the millions? They barely exist.<sup>1</sup>

What then of Germany, a nation justly forced to remember the suffering and devastation it once caused in the name of its people? How does a state incorporate its crimes against others into its national memorial landscape? How does a state recite, much less commemorate, the litany of its misdeeds, making them part of its reason for being? Under what memorial aegis, whose rules, does a nation remember its own barbarity? Where is the tradition for memorial *mea culpa*, when combined remembrance and self-indictment seem so hopelessly at odds? Unlike state-sponsored memorials built by victimized nations and peoples to themselves in Poland, Holland, or Israel, those in Germany are necessarily those of the persecutor remembering its victims. In the face of this necessary breach in the conventional "memorial code," it is little wonder that German national memory remains so torn and convoluted. The impact of the Holocaust on the very idea of the monument is thus crystallized in Germany's essential

memorial dilemma: How does a country like Germany build a new and just state on the bedrock memory of its terrible crimes?

One of the most fascinating responses to Germany's essential memorial conundrum is the rise of its "counter-monuments": brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being. Ethically certain of their duty to remember, but aesthetically skeptical of the assumptions underpinning traditional memorial forms, a new generation of contemporary artists and monument-makers in Germany is probing the limits of both their artistic media and the very notion of a memorial. They are heirs to a double-edged postwar legacy: a deep distrust of monumental forms in light of their systematic exploitation by the Nazis, and a profound desire to distinguish their generation from that of the killers through memory.<sup>2</sup> To their minds, the didactic logic of monuments, their demagogic rigidity, recall too closely traits they associate with fascism itself. A monument against fascism, therefore, would have to be a monument against itself: against the traditionally didactic function of monuments, against their tendency to displace the past they would have us contemplate—and finally, against the authoritarian propensity in all art that reduces viewers to passive spectators.

For German artists and sculptors like Jochen Gerz, Norbert Radermacher, and Horst Hoheisel, the possibility that memory of events so grave might be reduced to exhibitions of public craftsmanship or cheap pathos remains intolerable. They contemptuously reject the traditional forms and reasons for public memorial art, those spaces that either console viewers or redeem such tragic events, or indulge in a facile kind of *Wiedergutmachung* or purport to mend the memory of a murdered people. Instead of searing memory into public consciousness, they fear, conventional memorials seal memory off from awareness altogether. These artists fear rightly that to the extent that we encourage monuments to do our memory-work for us, we become that much more forgetful. They believe, in effect, that the initial impulse to memorialize events like the Holocaust may actually spring from an opposite and equal desire to forget them.

Rather than retelling the stories of counter-monuments in Hamburg, Kassel, and Berlin (which I've already explored in other articles and in *The Texture of Memory*<sup>3</sup>), I would like to look briefly at the ways one artist has negotiated this necessary breach in the conventional memorial code in a brand new counter-monument, unveiled recently in Saarbrücken. At the same time I would like to suggest that such counter-monuments might now lead us to re-evaluate both the traditional function of monuments and our own critical discussion of them after the Holocaust.

In keeping with the bookish, iconoclastic side of Jewish tradition, the first "memorials" to the Holocaust period came not in stone, glass, or steel—

but in narrative. The *Yizkor Bukher*—memorial books—recalled both the lives and the destruction of European Jewish communities according to the most ancient of Jewish memorial media: the book. Indeed, as the preface to one of these books suggests, “Whenever we pick up the book we will feel we are standing next to [the victims’] grave, because even that the murderers denied them.” The shtetl scribes hoped that when read, the *Yizkor Bukher* would turn the site of reading into memorial space. In response to what has been called “the missing gravestone syndrome,” the first sites of memory created by survivors were thus interior spaces, imagined gravesites.

Without realizing it, perhaps, conceptual artist Jochen Gerz has recently recapitulated not only this missing gravestone syndrome but also the notion of the memorial as an interior space. I refer not to his and Esther Shalev-Gerz’s vanishing monument in Harburg but to his newly dedicated, invisible monument in Saarbrücken, which takes the counter-monument to, shall we say, new depths.

Celebrated in Germany for his hand in Harburg’s *Gegen-Denkmal*, Gerz was appointed last year as a guest professor at the School of Fine Arts in Saarbrücken. In a studio class he devoted to conceptual monuments, Gerz invited his students to participate in a clandestine memory-project, a sort of guerrilla memorial action. The class agreed enthusiastically, swore themselves to secrecy, and listened as Gerz described his plan: Under the cover of night, eight students would steal into the great cobblestone square leading to the Saarbrücken Schloss, former home of the Gestapo during Hitler’s Reich. Carrying book bags laden with cobblestones removed from other parts of the city, the students would spread themselves across the square, sit in pairs, swill beer, and yell at each other in raucous voices, pretending to party. All the while, in fact, they would stealthily pry loose some 70 cobblestones from the square and replace them with the like-sized stones they had brought along, each embedded underneath with a nail so that they could be located later with a metal detector. Within days, this part of the memorial-mission had been accomplished as planned.

Meanwhile, other members of the class had been assigned to research the names and locations of every former Jewish cemetery in Germany, over 2,000 of them, now abandoned or vanished. When their classmates returned from their beer-party, their bags heavy with cobblestones, all set to work engraving the names of missing Jewish cemeteries on the stones, one by one. The night after they finished, the memory-guerrillas returned the stones to their original places, each inscribed and dated. But in a twist wholly consistent with the Gerzes’ previous counter-monument and conceptual performances, the stones were replaced face down, leaving no trace of the entire operation. The memorial would be invisible, itself only a memory, out of sight and therefore, Gerz hoped, *in mind*.

But as Gerz also realized, because the memorial was no longer visible, public memory would depend on knowledge of the memorial-action becoming public. Toward this end, Gerz wrote Oskar Lafontaine, minister-president of the Saarland and vice president of the German Social Democratic Party, apprising him of the deed and asking him for parliamentary assistance to continue the operation. Lafontaine responded with 10,000 DM from a special arts fund and a warning that the entire project was patently illegal. The public, however, had now become part of the memorial. For once the newspapers got wind of the project, a tremendous furor broke out over the reported vandalization of the square; editorials asked whether yet another monument like this was necessary; some even wondered whether or not the whole thing had been a conceptual hoax designed merely to provoke a memorial storm.

As visitors flocked to the square looking for the 70 stones out of over 8,000, they too began to wonder "where they stood" vis-à-vis the memorial stones: Were they standing on it? In it? Was it really there at all? On searching for memory, Gerz hoped, they would realize that such memory was already in them. This would be an interior memorial: as the only standing forms in the square, the visitors would become the memorials for which they searched.

Where the politicians stood was less equivocal. As Jochen Gerz rose to address the Saarbrücken Stadtverband to explain his project, the entire CDU contingent stood up and walked out. The rest of the parliament remained and voted the memorial into public existence. Indeed, they even voted to rename the plaza "Square of the Invisible Monument," its name becoming the only visible sign of the memorial itself. Whether or not the operation had ever really taken place, the power of suggestion had already planted the memorial where it would do the most good: not in the center of town, but in the center of the public's mind. In effect, Jochen Gerz's "2,160 Stones: A Monument against Racism" returns the burden of memory to those who come looking for it.

After such "anti-monuments," neither the idea of the public monument nor the visitors' approach to it can ever be quite the same. As contemporary monument-makers continue to challenge the very idea of the monument, to enliven the monument with the sense of its changes over time, we who visit these monuments might begin to rethink our own relationship to them and the memory they would embody. For public art in general, and Holocaust memorials in particular, tend to beg traditional art historical inquiry. Most discussions of Holocaust memorial spaces ignore the essentially public dimension of their performance, remaining either formally aestheticist or almost piously historical. But in fact, it may be precisely the public's interaction with the monument that finally constitutes its aesthetic life.

For by themselves, these memorials remain inert and amnesiac, dependent on visitors for whatever memory they finally produce. As an inert piece of stone, the monument keeps its own past a tightly held secret, gesturing away from its history to the events and meanings we bring to it in our visits. Precisely because monuments seem to remember everything but their own past, their own creation, our critical aim might now be to reinvest the monument with memory of itself, of its own coming into being. By returning to the memorial some memory of its own genesis, we remind ourselves of the memorial's essential fragility, its dependence on others for its life—that it was made by human hands in human times and places, and it is no more a natural piece of the landscape than we are.

All of which is meant to expand the idea of these memorials to include not only their conception and execution amid historical realities, but also their current and changing lives, even their eventual destruction. In this vein, we might also begin to highlight the process of public art over its often static result, the ever-changing life of the monument over its seemingly frozen face in the landscape. For too often, a community's monuments assume the polished, finished veneer of a death mask, unreflective of current memory, unresponsive to contemporary issues. Instead of enshrining an already enshrined memory, such an approach might provide an instructive glimpse into the monument's inner life—the tempestuous social, political, and aesthetic forces—normally hidden by a monument's taciturn exterior.

In the end, however, it may not be enough to ask whether or not our memorials remember the Holocaust, or even how they remember it. We should also ask to what ends we have remembered. That is, how do we respond to the current moment—the current, ongoing persecutions—in light of our remembered past? In this question, we recognize that the shape of memory cannot be divorced from the actions taken in its behalf, and that memory without consequences contains the seeds of its own destruction. For were we passively to remark only the contours of these memorials, were we to leave unexplored their genesis, and remain unchanged by the recollective act, it could be said that we have not remembered at all.

## NOTES

1. In the rare event when a state does commemorate its crimes, it is nearly always at the behest of formerly victimized citizens. The memorial unveiled 30 October 1990 in Moscow, for example, to "the millions of victims of a totalitarian regime" was instigated by a group calling itself "Memorial," composed of scholars, cultural figures, dissidents, and former victims of Stalin's terror.

Likewise, a new monument by Maya Lin to the Civil Rights movement in Montgomery, Alabama—inscribed with the names of those who died for the cause—was commissioned and constructed by the Southern Poverty Law Center there, which had chronicled and prosecuted civil rights cases. In neither the Soviet nor American case did the State initiate the monument, but in both instances representatives of the State later endorsed these memorials—a move by which both current governments sought to create an official distance between themselves and past, guilty regimes.

2. For elaboration of this theme, see Matthias Winzen, "The Need for Public Representation and the Burden of the German Past," *Art Journal* 48 (Winter 1989), pp. 309–14.

3. See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), from which this essay is adapted, and "The Counter-monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Winter 1992): 267–96.



# *Translation as Reversion: Paul Celan's Jerusalem Poems*

JOHN FELSTINER

IN 1933, THREATENED BY NAZISM, AN AUNT WHO had lived with Paul Celan's family during his childhood emigrated to Palestine. That year the boy also was Bar Mitzvah, and shortly afterward wrote to her about anti-Semitism in his school. He closed this letter to Palestine (his earliest extant writing) by asking his aunt how it's going with the languages: "*Speake-you English?*," he wrote, "*Und Hebräisch?*" I like to take this German-speaker's solicitude about English and Hebrew as a kind of warrant for my own need to translate Paul Celan and find the strain of Jewishness in him.

In 1938 Celan's own family might have emigrated to Palestine from Czernowitz, capital of Bukovina in the erstwhile Austrian empire. But Paul, turning 18, instead went to France to study medicine (en route he passed through Berlin on "Kristallnacht"). Then at the end of the war, having survived forced labor but lost his father and beloved mother in the 1942 deportations to the Ukraine, to Transnistria, he remarked wryly to a friend: "How would it be to arrive in Jerusalem, go to Martin Buber, and say: 'Uncle Buber, here I am, now you've got me!'" Buber had indeed emigrated in 1938 and gone on writing after the war in his native language, a sign that German-Jewish symbiosis was perhaps not totally annihilated.

In 1948, after leaving his Soviet-controlled homeland for Bucharest and then Vienna, Celan settled in Paris. Writing to relatives in the new and threatened State of Israel, he tried to "justify my destiny to you, who stand at the very center of Jewish destiny. . . . There's nothing in the world," he says, "for which a poet will give up writing, not even when he is a Jew and the language of his poems is German." Then the lonely, exiled, moneyless, barely published poet ventures this: "Perhaps I am one of the last who must live out to the end the destiny of the Jewish spirit in Europe. . . . And that may be saying a lot."

Paul Celan did live out that destiny, though in his case "fate" might better translate the word he used, *Schicksal*. He never came to terms with Germany after the Third Reich, writing lyrics that more and more exposed

---

JOHN FELSTINER teaches in Jewish Studies and English at Stanford University. He is the author of *The Lies of Art: Max Beerbohm's Parody and Caricature* (Knopf, 1972) and *Translating Neruda: The Way to Macchu Picchu* (Stanford, 1981; 1986). His book *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* will appear from Yale University Press in March 1995. This essay is adapted from a talk given in June at Mishkenot Sha'ananim in honor of the retirement of Professor H. M. Daleski.

those “thousand darknesses of deathbringing speech” he said the language had passed through, the *tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede*.<sup>1</sup>

Celan said this in Bremen in 1958, on receiving the city’s prestigious literature prize. His acceptance speech there started with a little lesson in roots, linguistic and otherwise: *Denken* and *Danken*, he told his listeners in the Bundesrepublik, “Thinking and thanking in our language are words from one and the same source. Whoever follows out their meaning enters the semantic field of: ‘recollect’ [*gedenken*], ‘bear in mind’ [*eingedenk sein*], ‘remembrance’ [*Andenken*].” Celan’s verbal tour tacitly lets his audience know that *Denken* implies more than the special, powerful sense Heidegger was giving it at the time. That “thinking” entails “remembering” certain others who also spoke “our language.” *Unsere Sprache*, Celan says in a “finely tuned sarcasm,” uttered in postwar Germany by a Jew who’d literally lost everything except that language, his mother tongue turned murderers’ tongue. *Erlauben Sie mir*, Celan then goes on politely, “Permit me, from this standpoint, to thank you.”

Years later, after writing hundreds more poems where thinking meant bearing in mind, after more prizes from Germany and yet an intensifying malaise that led to clinical confinements—after all this, plus a prideful jolt from the Six-Day War, Paul Celan journeyed to Israel in October 1969. He was Europe’s most significant postwar poet, yet an ill man, psychically torn. At the windmill opposite Mount Zion he was struck by Moses Montefiore’s motto on a crest: “Think and Thank.” In Tel Aviv he spoke to the Hebrew Writers Association: “I have come to you in Israel because I needed to,” he began. “I think I have a notion of what Jewish loneliness can be.” Then he spoke of the revived Hebrew language: “I take joy in every newly earned, self-discovered, fulfilled word that rushes up to strengthen those who turn toward it.”

Celan himself had long since turned or reverted—so I believe—toward the Hebraic word and what it embodied. In labor camp in 1942 he composed “*Chanson juive*” (“Jewish Song”), a lament whose Verlaine-like title he soon changed to “*An den Wassern Babels*”—“By the Waters of Babylon,” echoing Psalm 137’s *Al Naharot Bavel*. His lyric’s first word is its most telling: “Again by darkening pools / you murmur, willow, grieving.” A few months later he named another poem “*Aus der Tiefe*” after Psalm 130, “Out of the Depth.” And in 1944 Celan wrote “*Todesfuge*” (“Deathfuge”), whose closing couplet turns from the Gretchen of Goethe’s *Faust*—“Your golden hair Margareta”—toward Song of Songs: “Your ashen hair Shulamith.” With this now-legendary lyric I first found the idea of “translation as reversion” working decisively. But before saying how, I’ll dwell for a moment on my title.

Re-version, again-version: it’s a likely term for revising one’s translations, or for translation itself, which is another go at an “original” poem that

was already a version, as if translated from something earlier and unworded. Rainer Maria Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo" envisages the torso of a statue plus its earlier untruncated wholeness. But "We never witnessed his unheard-of head," the poet tells us, so a translation of Rilke becomes one more version reverting back to the torso's inner dazzling gaze, maybe even to the god himself *and* the sun he stood for *and* his art of poetry.

Reversion has some technical senses that give to think, as the French say—especially with Paul Celan in mind. To "revert" is to return to a former condition, like Celan at the close of his 1960 "Meridian" speech, cycling back through a ruinous history: "I am seeking, for I'm there again where I began, the place of my own origin"—seeking it "on a children's map," he adds. Reversion can mean atavism, the reappearance of earlier characteristics generations later. Witness Celan's 1962 poem "Tabernacle Window," which "gathers," Chagall-like, "the wander-/ East, the / Hovering Ones, the / Humans-and-Jews, / the People-of-the-Clouds," and which then "fetches a radiance from the graves, / goes to Ghetto and Eden," *geht zu Aleph und Jud* and finally to the Hebrew letter Beth that signals home, Sabbath candles, and biblical beginning: "to thee, / Beth,—which is / the house, where the table stands with / the light and the Light."

Reversion also occurs when a property returns to its former owner. This sense brings me back to Celan's "*Todesfuge*," for whose title I've recently tried the odd compound "Deathsfugue" in several publications but now think my earlier "Deathfugue" was better. "Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night / we drink you at morning and midday we drink you at evening / we drink and we drink," *Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts / wir trinken dich morgens und mittags wir trinken dich abends / wir trinken und trinken*. This lyric from the last months of wartime instills into its own fugal repetitions a deathcamp's day-in day-out repeated degradation, in its way a return of the repressed.

Yet given such repetition, I discovered that certain motifs were getting easier to translate: *wir trinken dich morgens*—yes, I've solved this already, the next time it comes round I've got my version, and the next and the next, there's no point in thinking anymore. And this too: *der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland*. This famous catchphrase recurs four times in "*Todesfuge*." First, so that my reader comprehends, I say "Death is a master from Deutschland." The next time, "Death is a master aus Deutschland." Then, "Death is ein Meister aus Deutschland." And lastly, setting a double-agent within my English, "der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland." By veering back around to the original, my version gets a ring of truth, so to speak, a moment's identity with verse by Paul Celan. In this turn or return of speech (unavailable to German readers), in this reversion, the murderers' tongue may sound strange and perhaps abrasive to American ears. Meanwhile translation,

notoriously a matter of alienation and loss, would here at least render his mother tongue back to the poet.

And for me, whose father was born in Lemberg and grew up on the Lower East Side with German at home—for me to bend my mind now on translating German turns me back toward my own past caught within my father's, and toward a European doom that would have resembled Celan's.

Reversion: often I've had to practice it another way, taking Celan's German translations of Shakespeare or Dickinson and reversing them back into English—not back into the original wording, of course, but into cross-bred English: an Elizabethan begetter crossed with a European survivor. Take Sonnet 79, where the poet/lover comes to sound like a zealous translator. Shakespeare:

. . . beauty doth he give  
And found it in thy cheek: he can afford  
No praise to thee but what in thee doth live.

Crossed with Celan:

. . . *Er kann dir Schönheit geben:  
sie stammt von dir – er raubte, abermals.  
Er rühmt und preist: er tauchte in dein Leben.*

Clearly the Bard has suffered a sea-change into something rich and strange. To hear just *how* strange, reverse the German by translating Celan translating—and metrically if possible, though rhyme eludes me:

[. . . To thee he can give beauty:  
it stems from thee – he plundered, once again.  
He'll praise and prize: he plunged into thy life.]

The added thrust of “plundered” and “plunged,” plus the doubling of “praise” and “prize,” and all Celan's extra verse breaks—these point up translation's reflexive movement, its possessive, repossessive, prepossessive force.

Or take Emily Dickinson:

I reason, we could die—  
The best Vitality  
Cannot excel decay,  
But, what of that?

In response, Celan is also revising his own memory of mortality:

*Ich denk: Sieh zu, man stirbt,  
der Saft, der in dir wirkt,*

*auch ihm gilt dies: Verdirb-  
ja und?*

Dickinson's already terse quatrain has been compacted even more:

[I think: Look here, we die,  
the sap that works in thee,  
it too knows this: Decay-  
so what?]

Cannily keeping the off-rhymes (or call them slant rhymes—"Tell all the Truth but tell it slant," Dickinson said), and cleaving to the original meter, Celan still turns rudely on the earlier lyric. He forces a colon where there was none, prompting an imperative "Look here" spoken to you alone, or to the poet herself or *himself*, and pushing her discreet conditional—"we could die"—into blank fact: "we die." Dropping Dickinson's deft word "best," he makes Vitality concrete ("the sap"), active ("that works"), and intimate ("in thee"). Then Celan's clipped, brutal *ja und?* tells us that one century later, there's no innocent arcing back over the intervening damage.

Yet Celan did turn back often, to Bible and Kabbalah. (Incidentally, late one night in Normandy years ago, going through Celan's immense library, I came on a thick black volume all in Hebrew. A German research team had been there recently, and not recognizing the book, had stuck in a fiche saying "*Wichtig?*," "Important?" It was the Bible.) Celan also harked back to Hebrew words themselves, cornerstones of Judaic consciousness, as if exercising his Right of Return, the חוק השבות.

Even in the early "Deathfugue," there are two motifs that counterpoint each other, recurring throughout the poem—one spoken by the Commandant: *dein goldenes Haar Margarete* ("your golden hair Margareta") and the other by some other voice: *dein aschenes Haar Sulamith* ("your ashen hair Shulamith"). We know Shulamith only from Song of Songs: שְׁכֵי שְׁכֵי הַשְּׁלֵמִית, "Return return O Shulamite," and indeed she does return, or let's say that Celan returns to her at the very end of "Deathfugue."

Another example, from twenty years later, is his poem "*Keine Sandkunst mehr*":

*Keine Sandkunst mehr, kein Sandbuch, Keine Meister.*

*Nichts erwürfelt.*

*Wieviel Stumme?*

*Siebenzehn.*

*Deine Frage, deine Antwort.*

*Dein gesang, was weiss er?*

*Tiefimschnee,*  
*iefimnee,*  
*i - i - e.*

No more sand art, no sand book, no masters.

Nothing on the dice.  
How many mutes?  
Seventeen.

Your question, your answer.  
Your song, what does it know?

Deepinsnow,  
eepinnow,  
e - i - o.

The sand of the covenant promise—"Your people shall be as the sands of the sea"—is packed into sands of desert wandering, then into ash as in Celan's first book, *THE SAND FROM THE URNS*, but now there's no more art, no book of this people, but mutes—and even then only seventeen. Something is missing, cut off from the *Amida*, the *Shmoneh-Esreh* Eighteen-Prayer of Jewish ritual, or from "18," יח, life itself, because in winter of 1942, in snow in the Ukraine, Celan's mother died.

Your song, what does it know? It knows enough to move toward silence: "Deepinsnow"—then a contraction "eepinnow, / e - i - o." Celan has signed this poem with an invisible Hebrew signature, reducing human perishment, *Tiefmschnee*, to the vowels alone, which in Hebrew have no characters to represent them—thus reducing to a kind of Scriptural silence.

What then becomes of this poem in a Hebrew translation? At lunch once I sat next to a professor from Tel Aviv and quizzed him on the final sequence. For “Deepinsnow” we arrived at עמוק בשלג (*amok basheleg*); then perhaps מוקל, then nothing but the vowel points: םׁ ןׁ ךׁ. Then I talked some more with him, and discovered to my astonishment that his wife and mother had somehow survived the same Ukrainian winter of 1942 that Celan’s mother did not survive.

This harking back of Celan's—or is it forward?—this harking back and forward to Hebrew, happens decisively in a December 1967 poem, “*DU SEI WIE DU, immer*,” “YOU BE LIKE YOU, ever”:

*DU SEI WIE DU, immer.*

*Stant vp Jherosalem inde  
erheyff dich*

*Auch wer das Band zerschnitt zu dir hin,  
 inde wirt  
 erluchtet  
 knüpfte es neu, in der Gehugnis,  
 Schlammbrocken schluckt ich, im Turm,  
 Sprache, Finster-Lisene,  
 kumi  
 ori.*

YOU BE LIKE YOU, ever.

*Ryse up Ierosalem and  
 rowse thyselfe*

The very one who slashed the bond unto you,  
*and becum  
 yllumyned*  
 knotted it new, in myndignesse,  
 spills of mire I swilled, inside the tower,  
 speech, dark-selvedge,  
*kumi  
 ori.*

In 1983, in *Prooftexts*, I traced the reversions in these lines: from the poet's High German to Meister Eckhart's medieval German and finally to Eckhart's very source, the Hebrew *kumi ori*, "Arise, shine," which is Isaiah exhorting the people to return into Zion.<sup>2</sup> I traced the reflux of this Jewish poet who'd cut his bond and was knotting it anew in memory, through the tongue-choking mire of exile toward messianic speech. Because Celan's own back-translation must be seen to turn from modern through medieval German and then into Hebrew, I asked in my article: "What, I wonder, would become of [this poem], which exposes Celan's Diaspora fate, in a Hebrew translation?"

In 1985, writing for the Israeli magazine *Ariel*, I noted happily Manfred Winkler's new collection of Hebrew translations from Celan, but felt that in cases where a German poem itself had already converted for a moment to Hebrew, "the Hebrew translation naturally shows no difference"—"a strange loss quite distinct from the usual loss in translation."<sup>3</sup>



Then in 1986, I published "Mother Tongue, Holy Tongue," on Celan's poems that end by breaking into Hebrew—transliterated Hebrew.<sup>4</sup> I was fascinated at not having to translate such endings, but if those poems "were wholly translated into Hebrew," I said, "something decisive would be lost: that surprise, that turn of breath, that difference of the Holy Tongue." Celan may have needed such difference, such tension.

In 1987, to my delight, a book-length Celan selection came out, translated by the Israeli composer Benzion Orgad. And Shimon Sandbank, who had earlier translated Celan's poetry and his "Meridian" speech, published in *Haaretz* translations with commentary on three of the lyrics that revert to Hebrew. Later, in the *Tel Aviv Review*, I was able to reflect on these new versions.<sup>5</sup> With "*Du sei wie du*," Orgad dramatically renders that title phrase *hayi asher tih'yi*, echoing the divine *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, "I am that I am." And elsewhere in his translation he rightly borrows from Isaiah. But where I have gone to the Wyclif Bible (rather than the King James, in this case) for an archaic equivalent to Eckhart, *Ryse up Ierosalem and rowse thyselfe*, how can Hebrew replicate Celan's phasing between modern and medieval? Well, Sandbank ingeniously draws on the Aramaic translation of Isaiah, the Targum Yonatan—*itglah, itglah, kumi yerushlem*—for an italicized strangeness. Then of course both Israeli versions end with the original Hebrew קומי ארץ (*kumi ori*). In the promised land, Celan's differencing gets resolved—that tension vanishes, between his darkened mother tongue and his distanced holy tongue.

When he actually reached Israel, in October 1969, Celan one day wrote out "*Du sei wie du*" for a friend, and this time he altered the poem, putting *kumi ori* not in transliterated form but in his fluent Hebrew script—the words borne upstream now to the source, the promise momentarily fulfilled. His experience of Israel, the road not taken, was intense, at times elated: reunions with family and childhood friends and émigrés who'd known his parents, perambulations of the Old City walls, readings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Celan's readings in Germany during the 1960s had been increasingly well received. But before his Jerusalem recital, at Beit Agron, he was (I'm told) apprehensive about drawing and reaching an audience. In the event, a large gathering welcomed him fervently. Some Hebrew versions of his work were read, and Celan ended the evening with his June '67 poem "*Denk dir*" (Just think), which begins:

JUST THINK:

the Peat-Bog Soldier of Masada

makes a home for himself.

In one breath this calls up 1930s' anti-Nazi camp prisoners alongside ancient Judean defenders of Masada, so as to acknowledge the Six-Day War whose modern Israelis are repossessing the land.

Celan in that Jerusalem recital ended with this: "Just think, this came toward me, / name-awake, hand-awake," *namenwach, handwach*. In draft, that last phrase was *handnamenwach*, "handname-awake," even closer to the *yad vashem* (hand and name, i.e., monument and memorial) that God promised the people in Isaiah—whence Israel's Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem.

In Israel in 1969, Celan's Hebrew proved surprisingly resourceful. "He remembered quotations," says a friend, "and came up suddenly with difficult words and sentences." Someone else recalls that he loved the Hebrew roots. But a meridian had not really come round: 1969 was not Bukovina. Celan knew the European-born German-speakers who in Israel had become Hebrew poets: Winkler, Yehuda Amichai, Dan Pagis, Natan Zach, David Rokeah, Tuvia Ruebner. His joy in their "newly earned . . . fulfilled word" came alloyed with doubts about his own choice, as he'd told his Israeli relatives in 1948, "to live out to the end the destiny of the Jewish spirit in Europe."

In the Amichais' kitchen, just down the street from the Montefiore windmill, Celan gave an interview to Radio Israel, saying he was *selbstverständlich* a Jew—"self-evidently," "of course." Both "thematic" and "spiritual" Jewishness are "interwoven in everything that someone like me writes, someone who grew up in a Jewish environment." Here is Celan's key remark from a tape of the interview that I've managed to obtain: "Of course Jewishness has a thematic aspect. But I think the thematic alone doesn't suffice to define what's Jewish. Jewishness is so to speak a spiritual concern as well." That odd term *pneumatisch*, from Greek *pneuma*, is Celan's version of Hebrew רוּחַ (*ruach*, wind, breath), the "spirit" that hovered over the deep at Creation. Yet in this interview, he stressed his European Germanic culture too: "Rilke was very important to me, and afterwards Kafka."

Back in France after a fortnight, Celan wrote to Tel Aviv: "I'm already thinking of coming back"; and to Jerusalem: "I'll definitely come again." A spate of short lyrics, the so-called "Jerusalem" poems, followed his return to "this cold city Paris." The first of them begins:

*ES STAND*  
*der Feigensplitter auf deiner Lippe,*  
  
*es stand*  
*Jerusalem um uns.*

Because the verb *stehen*, "stand," throughout Celan's writing means staunchness, holding on against the odds, I tried in my *Ariele* essay an idiomatic turn:

YOUR LIP HELD  
a sliver of fig,  
  
around us Jerusalem  
held.

But when my friend Chimen Abramsky pointed out an echo I should have heard anyway, Celan's re-sounding of Psalms 122 and 125: "Our feet are standing within thy gates, Jerusalem," "Jerusalem, mountains are around her as the Lord is around His people"—then I recognized a higher claim, along with the virtue of incremental repetition. In the *Tel Aviv Review* I revised those verses:

THERE STOOD  
a sliver of fig on your lip,  
  
there stood  
Jerusalem around us.

By then, too, I'd seen Orgad's and Sandbank's identical rendering of that last stanza: עמדה ירושלים סביב לנו (*amda / yerushalayim saviv lanu*), "there stood / Jerusalem around us." Like Celan here, the translation turns and tunes almost sacrally to the Psalms.

Walter Benjamin speculated about certain poems that seem to "require" translating—the English word "require" (though not his German) suggesting "seek again." And elsewhere, reflecting on history and revolution, Benjamin cited Karl Kraus: "Origin is the goal," which I take as a motto for translation too. Celan's *Es stand / Jerusalem um uns*, in turning back to Scripture, requires translation to knot the bond or *Bund* or *brit* or covenant anew.

Here is another Jerusalem poem by Celan, straining between the doubt and the hope of reuniting with what this city held for him:

*Es wird etwas sein, später,  
das füllt sich mit dir  
und hebt sich  
an einen Mund*

*Aus dem zerscherbten  
Wahn  
steh ich auf  
und seh meiner Hand zu,  
wie sie den einen  
einzigsten  
Kreis zieht*

At the heart of this poem, dead center, a single word, *Wahn*, exposes the affliction, the madness that beset Celan more and more during the 1960s. But “madness” takes two syllables, and after countless attempts I’ve come to want to mate my version—syllable for syllable, verse by verse—exactly to the German, for the challenge of it and because fulfillment, here, is expected in time:

THERE WILL be something, later,  
that brims full with you  
and lifts up  
toward a mouth

Out of a shardstrewn  
craze  
I stand up  
and look upon my hand,  
how it draws the one  
and only  
circle

For *zerscherbten*, the usual “shattered” would have kept time all right, but “shardstrewn” feels fresher and preciser. According to Kabbalah, at Creation the divine vessels broke into fragments that humankind must reunite. In the writings of Gershom Scholem, whom Celan read fervently (and who gave him a party in Jerusalem), these fragments are *Scherben*, so I hear the poet standing up out of madness “shards” to look upon his writing hand, how it draws round a meridian from end to beginning.

Paul Celan did not achieve that perfect reversion. His next Jerusalem poem begins ambiguously with *Das Nichts*, the “Nothingness” of an ineffable or an eclipsed God, then asserts that “the end believes we’re / the beginning,” and closes on *eine klamme Helle*, a “clammy” or—by dint of rootwork—a “clamping” or “a binding brightness.”

At moments such as this I want to borrow Kafka’s notebook jotting, “Writing as a form of prayer,” *Schreiben als Form des Gebetes*, and call translation, too, a form of prayer. “There will be something, later,” *Es wird etwas sein, später*—but mightn’t *später* be “soon now,” still keeping the beat? I felt the force of this possibility—translation as a form of prayer—in Jerusalem almost twenty years ago, when thanks to my cherished friend Bill Daleski, I’d taught for a year at the Hebrew University. It was June, I was living in Nayot. One morning on the 7 A.M. news I was stunned to hear that my neighbors’ firstborn, Moshe, had been killed patrolling the Lebanese border. The day before, I’d been thinking about some memorial verses by Yehuda Amichai:

אח הילד החי צריכים  
לנקות בשבוע ממשחק

*et hayeled hachai tsrichim / lenakot b'shuvo mimischak.*

Literally, “we have to clean up a living child on his return from play.” I had an inkling of what was going on in the Hebrew because Moshe’s mother had been my superb Hebrew teacher for the year. With nothing that was enough to say, at that moment it felt vitally necessary to translate those lines well. But how to keep their balance—three stresses per line: *et ha yéled hachái tsrichím / lenakót b’shuvó mimischák*—and how to keep especially their ambiguous pause at the line break, where *tsrichim* (“we need”) is first heard as a main verb (“we need the child”), and then heard a moment later as the auxiliary to *lenakot* (“we need to clean”)? Somehow that June, against the sudden grief and loss, I needed to go over and over Amichai’s lines until I had a fitting version: “it’s the living child we need / to scrub when he’s back from play.”

Doubtless this could still be better done, and that too is the point of translation as reversion. Remember “poor Dencombe” in Henry James’s “The Middle Years,” who on receiving a copy of his newly published book sits anxiously down and starts revising then and there. Or better, translators are like that beggar employed to wait on the outskirts of the shtetl, watching for when Messiah would come. Asked how he liked his work: “Well, the pay’s not so hot, but it’s a steady job!”

“Oh Lord, when will we stop changing?” as Melville said, though perhaps he wasn’t thinking of translation. Translation, like prayer, is repetition with a difference, and I’m impressed by the root that Hebrew שנה (*shanah*, “repeat”) shares with שונה (*shoneh*, “different”). I know I’ll never have done with Rilke’s “Archaic Torso of Apollo.” Every time I run it off for a class or workshop, I redo something. But isn’t that what we’re told by the glowing stone, on which “there is no place / that does not see you”: *Du musst dein Leben ändern*, “You must change your life”—or is it your “line”?

Paul Celan on 13 April 1970 wrote a poem that owes deeply, I think, to Rilke. It ends:

the Open Ones carry  
the stone behind their eye,  
it knows you,  
come the Sabbath,

*am Sabbath.* A week later he went into the Seine River from the Pont Mirabeau and drowned. Like Sabbath itself, his poems keep on anticipating some redemptive time. Celan’s final written word was *Sabbath*, “Sabbath”: the German and English cognates both point back to Hebrew שבת, *Shabbat*.

Closing his last poem, Hebrew marked a threshold the poet felt he could not cross, a rest and refreshment that were not to be his, a source that he turned toward and that—I hope—stays open for his poems.

#### NOTES

1. The citations of Celan's prose and poetry in this essay are chiefly taken from Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5 vols., ed. Beda Allemann and Stefan Reichert, with Rolf Bücher (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983). All translations are mine.
2. "Translating Paul Celan's 'Du sei wie du,'" *Prooftexts* 3,1 (Jan. 1983): 91–108.
3. "Translating Paul Celan's Jerusalem Poems," *Ariel* 62 (1985): 57–68.
4. "Mother Tongue, Holy Tongue: On Translating and Not Translating Paul Celan," *Comparative Literature* 38, 2 (Spring 1986): 113–136.
5. "Mother Tongue, Holy Tongue: Celan into Hebrew," *Tel Aviv Review* 3 (1991): 148–164.

# *Jolson, the Jazz Singer and the Jewish Mother: or How My Yiddishe Momme Became My Mammy*

IRV SAPOSNIK

Russian-Jewish immigrants came from the *shtetls* and ghettos out to Hollywood. . . . In this magical place that had no relationship to any reality they had ever seen before in their lives, or that anyone else had ever seen, they decided to create their idea of an eastern aristocracy. . . . The American Dream is a Jewish invention.<sup>1</sup>

## I

*THE JAZZ SINGER*, LIKE OTHER LANDMARK MOVIES, is as much an icon of American culture as of film history. Like other iconic films, *The Jazz Singer* is also a product of the Jewish imagination. More than just the first film to use sound as dialogue, *The Jazz Singer* is a visual and verbal parable of the Jewish experience in America. Its story is a paradigm of the Jewish dream in conflict with American reality; its characters exemplify the clash between Old World values and New World ambition; its music is a mix of Black jazz and Yiddish blues, all by way of Jewish Tin Pan Alley.

Even as *The Jazz Singer* opened the way to sound in the movies, it allowed a new breed of Jewish-Americans to tell their story with songs and speech. The speech, the few times that it is heard in the film, is unaccented and full of self-assurance; the songs, heard more often, combine Old World sentiment with New World confidence. They are models of a new Jewish-American music made popular by new Jewish-American performers.

Al Jolson was hardly a new performer when he agreed to star in *The Jazz Singer*; on the contrary, he was the most popular performer in America. Yet he was also the most famous among the Jewish performers who, earlier

---

IRV SAPOSNIK is the Executive Director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation in Madison, Wisconsin. He has written about Yiddish and Jewish American literature, and is currently working on an article on Jewish comedy.



in the century, had traveled from the immigrant inner city to vaudeville and then to Broadway and Hollywood. Eddie Cantor, George Jessel, Sophie Tucker, Fannie Brice: their names have become synonymous with the Jewish-American success story. They were the Jewish-American pioneers who shaped the trail out of the ghetto.

Jolson's success story, even more than theirs, was the very stuff of mythic lore, and was, as all accounts suggest, the basis for Sam Raphaelson's short story, "The Day of Atonement"—and then of his 1925 play, *The Jazz Singer*. As Raphaelson recalled years later, it was the electricity of Jolson's performance and the allure of his rags-to-riches story that inspired him to write the short story that later became the play and film. Raphaelson was enchanted as well by the songs he heard Jolson sing, for in them he heard echoes of his Jewish childhood and the music of the synagogue: "This grotesque figure in blackface, kneeling at the end of a runway which projected him into the heart of his audience, flinging out his white gloved hands, was embracing that audience with a prayer—an evangelical moan—a tortured imperious call that hurtled through the house like a swift electrical lariat with a twist that swept the audience right to the edge of the runway. The words didn't matter. It was the emotion—the emotion of a cantor."<sup>2</sup>

The equation between jazz and prayer that intrigued Raphaelson when first seeing Jolson would become the central metaphor of play and film. The conflict between old and new, between parents and children, between Cantor Rabinowitz and his self-named son, Jack Robin, would be centered on the conflict between these two musical forces, and be exemplified by the choice that Jack is forced to make between singing in the synagogue on Yom Kippur, or appearing at the opening performance of his new show. Jack must choose between Kol Nidre and Irving Berlin, between remaining in the world of his father(s), or becoming a disguised American.

While the conflict is resolved differently in play and film, the emotional and liturgical battle in both is framed in song. To coin a phrase, musical choice is the choice of destiny. For both Raphaelson, and for Warner Brothers, Jewish-American identity depends upon the songs we choose to sing, and how we choose to sing them. Do we continue to sing in the traditional cantillation of our ancestors, or do we, as Jack Robin does in the film, choose to "sing jazzy"?

For Raphaelson, the two were not necessarily incompatible, though in his art he fails to reconcile them. As he says in the preface to his play: "I have used a Jewish youth as my protagonist because the Jews are determining the nature and scope of jazz more than any other race—more than the negroes from whom they have stolen jazz and given it a new color and meaning. Jazz is Irving Berlin, Al Jolson, George Gershwin, Sophie Tucker. These are Jews with their roots in the synagogue."<sup>3</sup>

Raphaelson recognized that the “new color” and meaning that the Jews gave to jazz emerged from their synagogue roots. That new color was a merging of blackface and white, even as the music that emerged was a synthesis of black rhythms and Jewish blues. Rather than stealing black jazz, the Jews added a Yiddish sigh to form a new kind of American music, a Jewish jazz. This new Jewish jazz likewise helped popularize the disguise of blackface, by which the Jews could pay faint homage to the African-American music they had adapted, while at the same time conceal their own ethnic origins. The Jewish entertainer in blackface, the Jewish composer of ragtime tunes, both acknowledged and obscured their synagogue roots.

In both short story and play, Raphaelson struggled with the conflict between Judaism and jazz. Despite some ambivalence, he returns his jazz singer to the synagogue to sing on Yom Kippur. In the play, Jack chooses to follow his father on the bimah, and sing for *the* chosen people instead of *his* chosen people. His return to the stage is left for the future, even as the final words of the play seem to suggest that he has made the necessary choice.

For the people who made the film, however, whose roots were likewise in the synagogue, the choice between jazz and Judaism would have to be spelled out less ambiguously. As they saw the Jewish-American experience, as they retold the Jewish-American story, stage and synagogue were compatible, as long as stage prevailed. So while Jack returns to the synagogue to sing Kol Nidre in the next to the last scene, it is only a guest appearance. In the film’s final scene, Jack is onstage, singing “My Mammy” to his mammy, with the applause and the approval of all.

While Raphaelson objected to much about the film, and especially the final scene, it is the Warner Brothers *Jazz Singer* that lives in the cultural memory. Clearly, the people who made the movies, as well as many Jewish-Americans like them, preferred the film to the play, for they saw it as being closer to their lives and their beliefs. After all, like Jack Robin they too moved away from their neighborhoods, their families, their immigrant roots, to seek their fortune elsewhere. Like Jack, they too made a guest appearance at Kol Nidre services, but spent the rest of the year singing different songs.

## II

While *The Jazz Singer* is not by definition a musical, Jolson as star guaranteed that much music would be included in the film. While it was important to include songs that were identifiable with Jolson, it was likewise critical to include songs that would reinforce the struggle between Old World and New as exemplified by Cantor Rabinowitz and his wife. While both are in and of the ghetto, the Cantor is depicted as stubborn, rigid, unbending, condemned to be left behind in his insularity; his wife,

in contrast, is more flexible, able and willing to follow her son wherever his ambition may lead him.

There are two kinds of songs in *The Jazz Singer*. There are the "American" songs sung by Jolson and largely identified with him—"Dirty Hands, Dirty Face," "Toot, Toot, Tootsie," "Blue Skies," "Mother Of Mine, I Still Have You," and "My Mammy." In contrast, there are the "Jewish songs," "Kol Nidre" and "Yahrzeit Licht," sung reverentially by the two cantorial figures in the film, the fictional Cantor Rabinowitz, and the real Cantor Yosselle Rosenblatt. Two kinds of songs, two kinds of places, two kinds of effects. The "American" songs are sung in either a club, a theater, or once most notably in the Rabinowitz home as a preview of the future. The "Jewish" songs are of the synagogue or the cantorial concert hall, set pieces reserved for a select few who are literally and figuratively passing away.

The "American" songs are of course sung in English, and therefore comprehensible to most of the audience; the "Jewish" songs are in Aramaic and Yiddish, two Jewish languages of the past, and barely understood by most American Jews. The "American" songs are about love between parent and child ("Dirty Hands, Dirty Face"), a temporary parting with a vow of constant communication ("Toot, Toot, Tootsie"), a promised future with blue skies to look forward to ("Blue Skies"), the constancy of mother love even after widespread rejection ("Mother of Mine, I Still Have You"), and the everlasting bond between mother and child ("My Mammy"). The Jewish songs—"Kol Nidre" and "Yahrzeit Licht"—are about renunciation and the unceasing memory of death.

The contrast is reinforced by singer and song. The song "Yahrzeit Licht," sung by Yosselle Rosenblatt in concert, is typical of the Jewish music in the film. Both words and music form an elegy for a lost world, the Yiddish world of Eastern Europe, transplanted to the Lower East Side and now bypassed by the fast-paced American generation. On a visit to Chicago, Jack Robin is drawn to the sentimental Yiddishkeit that both song and singer evoke, and also to memories of his father. But he is as out of place in that concert hall as he is in his old neighborhood, and as he will be later in his father's *kittel*. Even as Jack muses on what he has left behind, Cantor Rosenblatt chants the kaddish for his father's dead world.

Song and story come together when Jack's father actually dies at the end of the film. But Cantor Rabinowitz has been silenced long before. His only audible words in the film are "stop," but no one, least of all his son, will stop for him. The world passes him by, even as he passes from it. His death is both a plot convenience and a symbolic necessity. The resolute Old World Jewish father becomes the failed father of the New, the father that most of the movie moguls, including the Warner Brothers, tried to deny. His

passing, while sad, is salutary, for it allows mother and son to move together into the New World.

Song and story build toward a mother and child reunion. Even as the young Jack runs away from home, he puts a photo of his mother in his pocket, and when he returns home years later on the way to becoming a star, he tells his mother about his dreams for both of them in the only extended dialogue in the entire film. It is here, more than in the songs, that film sound is born.

The famous conversation between Jack and his mother is more than a technical advance; it is required hearing for an understanding of what *The Jazz Singer* is all about. For it is in this scene that Jack and his mother are liberated from the confines of the old ideas and thrust into the new world of American mobility. After Jack's show-biz rendition of Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies," his ad-lib dialogue allows us to hear the words of the promised future. We have met the future, he affirms, and it is us.

JACK: Did you like that, Mama?

MOTHER: Yes.

JACK: I'm glad of it. I'd rather please you than anybody I know of. Oh, darlin', will you give me something?

MOTHER: What?

JACK: You'll never guess. Shut your eyes, Mama. Shut 'em for little Jackie. Ha. I'm gonna steal something. (Kisses her. She titters.) Ha, ha, ha, ha. I'll give it back to you some day, too, you see if I don't. Mama darlin', if I'm a success in this show, well, we're gonna move from here. Oh yes, we're gonna move up in the Bronx. A lot of nice green grass up there and a whole lot of people you know. There's the Ginsbergs, the Guttenbergs, and the Goldbergs. Oh, a whole lotta Bergs; I don't know 'em all. And I'm gonna buy you a nice black silk dress, Mama. You see Mrs. Friedman, the butcher's wife, she'll be jealous of you.

MOTHER: Oh, no—

JACK: Yes, she will. You see if she isn't. And I'm gonna get you a nice pink dress that'll go with your brown eyes.

MOTHER: No, Jackie, no I-I-I-I

JACK: What? Whatta you mean, no? Who is—who is telling you? Whatta you mean, no? Yes, you'll wear pink or else. Or else you'll wear pink. (He laughs.) And, darlin', oh, I'm gonna take you to Coney Island.

MOTHER: Yeah?

JACK: Yes, I'm gonna ride on the Shoot-the Chutes. An' you know in the Dark Mill. Ever been in the Dark Mill?

MOTHER: Oh, no. I wouldn't go. . . .

JACK: Well, with me, it's all right. I'll kiss you and hug you. You see if I don't. [Mother starts blushing.] Now Mama, Mama, stop now. You're gettin' kittenish. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Jack and his mother are off on their journey into the future. Yet the journey is somewhat uneven. He is the star; she is his audience. But then that is the fate of the immigrant Jewish mother. All she can do is *kvell* as her son makes it big in show business. And *kvell* she does, as, on bended knee, he sings to her of his undying affection: "Mammy," he sings out, "I'd walk a million miles/ For one of your smiles/ My Mammy."

### III

As the Jewish mother blends with the Southern Mammy, the immigrant experience runs its course. Movie magic triumphs once again, as the Hollywood moguls offer their belated tribute to the mothers whom most of them revered. But their heartstrings are now "tangled around Alabama," instead of the shtetl or the Lower East Side. With their fathers out of the way, and their mothers Americanized, they are freed of their ethnic burden. While they may still speak with an accent, and carry deep within them their East European roots, neither their names nor their parents will ever give them away.

Neither will the songs they sing. The Eastern European mother of such popular Yiddish songs as "A Brivele der Mamen," and the East Side Jewish mother of the half-Yiddish, half-English "My Yiddishe Mama," is now replaced by Hattie McDaniel. The Jewish mother has become a black mammy, the musical equivalent of blackface. And blackface, according to Michael Rogin, "is the instrument that transfers identities from immigrant Jew to American. . . . Supplying his spontaneity and freeing him to be himself, blackface made Jolson a unique and therefore representative American."<sup>5</sup>

Blackface transferred identities from the Jewish mother as well as her son. Unwilling to leave her behind, Jewish sons and daughters disguised her as well as themselves. Blackface, like jazz, became a metaphor for American, perhaps its code word. In time, blackface and black music overshadowed the Yiddish world. Yiddish writers of song or story, as well as Yiddish mothers and their children, had no choice but to transform themselves or be left hopelessly behind. Mothers who wished to join their children had to "go native."

"America gonif" was about to rob the Jewish mother of her Yiddishkeit. What Yiddish song had created was about to end. "A Brivele der Mamen"

(1907) is only one of many Yiddish songs in which the Jewish mother was used as a reminder of the separation that emigration enforced. Its three stanzas, sung to a plaintive tune, foreshadow what was later to become commingled with nostalgia for the old home. The sadness of separation, the son's lack of responsibility, the mother's complaint that in eight years he hadn't written her one letter, much of which later became comic shtick, was in 1907 no matter for laughter. The experience was too fresh, the pain too acute. Absence may make the heart grow fonder, but the head forgets too soon.

A song of the immigrant generation, "A Brivele der Mamen," expressed the fears of both parents and children. The mother who waits in silence for a letter that never comes is seen as a tragic figure, the embodiment of a Yiddishkeit as abandoned as she. The son, perhaps unwittingly, becomes increasingly enmeshed in the allure of America, and forges a new life without any acknowledgment of the life and people he left behind. Description becomes admonition, with just a faint hope; perhaps it was not too late to change direction.

But of course it was too late. Mothers continued to be left behind, even if the separation was only a borough apart. After Jewish immigration came Jewish mobility, and the Lower East Side became the old country. By 1925, when the play of *The Jazz Singer* opened on Broadway, moving away had become a commonplace of Jewish-American life. And the songs people sang reflected their ambivalent feelings toward what was both painful and necessary.

"My Yiddishe Mamma," is as expressive of twenties' sentiment as "A Brivele der Mamen" had been of turn-of-the-century attitudes. Written by Jack Yellen and Lew Pollack in 1925, it became particularly identified with Sophie Tucker, especially after she recorded it in both English and Yiddish versions on two sides of a single record. Two languages for a mixed generation. Side by side, Yiddish and English establish a balance between old and new, between parents and children, between past and future. Parents and children are in transit, and the Yiddishe Momme, while no longer abandoned, is put in her place.

Or perhaps, more accurately places, for the Yiddish and English versions offer different mothers for different audiences. The English Yiddishe Momme is placed in "a humble East Side tenement," and the singer reaches across "the trails of Time" to recollect the "three flights up in the rear . . . where my childhood days were spent." Separation has set in; the singer has grown up, and grown away. The past is remembered with affection, but it remains irretrievable. The Jewish mother, like the old shtetl, lies buried in time.

"My Yiddishe Momme" in Yiddish seems to be a different song. Past and present are intermingled. While the Jewish mother has grown old along with her surroundings, she is still an active presence, still capable of

nurturing the world around her. She belongs in her world, and in ours. She is timeless:

As I stand here and think my old mother comes to mind.  
 No made-up, well dressed lady, just a mother.  
 Bent over from great sorrow, with a pure Jewish heart  
 And with cried-out eyes.  
 In the same little room where she's gotten old and gray  
 She sits and cries and dreams of long-gone days  
 When the house was full with the sound of children's voices  
 And the kitchen smelled of roast and dumplings.  
 You can be sure our house did not lack poverty,  
 But there was always enough for the children.  
 She used to voluntarily give us bread from her mouth  
 And she would have given up her life for her children as well.  
 Millions of dollars, diamonds, big beautiful houses—  
 But one thing in the world you get only one of from God:  
 A yidishe mama, she makes the world sweet  
 A yidishe mama, oh how bitter when she's missing.  
 You should thank God that you still have her with you—  
 You don't know how you'll grieve when she passes away.  
 She would have leaped into fire and water for her children.  
 Not cherishing her is certainly the greatest sin.  
 Oh, how lucky and rich is the person who has such a beautiful gift  
 from God:  
 Just a little old yidishe mama, my mama.<sup>6</sup>

A brief moment in time, a vignette in which the Yiddish Dream of continuity and the American Dream of uniqueness hang in the balance. Perhaps in 1925 it was still possible to bring Yiddish into the new America? Those that believed in sentiment held on to that illusion. But those who manufactured a movie-made illusion prevailed, and despite all their ambivalences, they chose to be Americans first. The Yiddishe Momme was left alone with her memories.

For all its reverence for the Jewish Mother, "My Yiddishe Momme" is more elegy than celebration. While its Yiddish voice is reluctant to let go, its intimations of impending mortality suggest the inescapable passing of time. Like much in Yiddish American culture, it refuses to admit defeat, but instead recalls the recent past in order to restrain the inevitable.

#### IV

By choosing to be Americans first, the makers of *The Jazz Singer* insured that their film would be popular with the widest possible audience. And they



likewise insured that their Jewish audience would have to follow them or be left behind. Yet they certainly had no intention of leaving their mothers behind. They needed them too much.

So while the use of the mother as a metaphor of change has its antecedents in the Yiddish song, her role in *The Jazz Singer* reverses what many of these songs suggest. From an Old World figure left behind on foreign shores, from a lonely East Side widow in her walk-up flat, she has now been co-opted, for better or worse, into the native tradition. She needs a new look and a new language so that she can join her son in his success.

By the next decade, the Jewish son had become not only a jazz singer, but a jazz entrepreneur, marketing black performers: like Irving Mills who managed Duke Ellington, like Moe Gale who was known as "the Great White Father of Harlem," and like Joe Glaser, who was responsible for the success of Louis Armstrong and Lionel Hampton. By the end of the 20s, the Jewish mother's song was over, while her son's song had just begun.

Perhaps Jessel put it best as he eulogized Jolson: "In 1910 the Jewish people who emigrated here were a sad lot. . . . Men of thirty-five seemed to take on the attitude of their fathers and grandfathers; they walked with stooped shoulders. When they sang, they sang with lament in their hearts and their voices, always as if they were pleading for help from above. And the older they got, the more they prayed for the return to . . . the simple little villages where they spent their childhood. . . . And then there came on the scene a young man, vibrantly pulsing with life and courage, who marched on the stage, head held high . . . and told the world that the Jew in America did not have to sing in sorrow but could shout happily. . . . And when he cried "Mammy" it was in appreciation, not in lament."

*The Jazz Singer* celebrates a new song of ascendance by the Jewish son (and a few daughters), and the significant influence that Jewish culture, and especially Jewish music, has had on American culture. But it likewise affirms the need for that culture, and its music, to cross over or perish. Just as the Jewish mother must fade into her American counterpart, so too does Jewish music need to adapt to an American idiom. What *The Jazz Singer* begins is finalized in the next decade by "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen," and "And The Angels Sing." From blackface, to name change, to marrying non-Jews, to jazzing-up Jewish music, the disguise becomes the identity.

The Yiddishe Momme of the recent past is past redemption. In the next generation, she becomes a figure of fun, a caricature that moves from silence to shrill authority. No longer a moral force, she becomes a nudge, a yenta, a yidene. Gone are the days of Yiddishkeit, and with them her identity as caretaker and giver.

*The Jazz Singer* was more prophetic than either Sam Raphaelson or Warner Brothers could have imagined. Raphaelson had written what he

considered “a simple, corny, well-felt little melodrama,” and Warner Brothers had invested their money in sound above everything else. Yet it was the story that captured the imagination, for it was the story of the emerging generation, a generation, as Raphaelson observed quoting Matthew Arnold, that was “lost between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born.”<sup>8</sup>

But that generation was not as powerless as Raphaelson thought. In making *The Jazz Singer* it dictated the style and the identity of Jewish-American culture for many years to come. From the 1930s to the 1960s, Jews went underground, preparing, in such enclaves as the Borscht Belt, for their next emergence as comics and writers. For some, however, that time would be too distant. Raphaelson himself stopped writing Jewish material and established a career as a writer of sophisticated screen plays. Warner Brothers rarely made another Jewish film until well after WWII. And Al Jolson recorded Jewish songs only toward the end of his long career. Not until the 1960s could Jews be Jews again.

*The Jazz Singer* was filmed twice more, but by the 1950s and the 1980s its mythic power had diminished. While both newer versions were popular, the story was most powerful when it was first filmed. In 1927, Jewish-Americans were at the threshold of a new identity, and Warner Brothers and Al Jolson were their pioneers. In 1927 Jewish music was at a balance between Old World cadences and New World beats, and Jewish entertainers walked a thin line between both. In 1927, Jews were still torn between jazz and Judaism.

In his preface to the play, Raphaelson notes that: “You find the soul of a people in the songs they sing.”<sup>9</sup> In the twenties, Jewish-Americans were singing two kinds of songs. The Yiddish soul and the American soul were still possible partners, but the partnership didn’t last beyond the next decade. As Neal Gabler observes: *The Jazz Singer* suggested, and the next decade proved, that the Jews could bring the synagogue to show business, but there was no possible reciprocity.<sup>10</sup>

This way out of the ghetto was a one-way street, and those who chose to remain in the old neighborhood were left behind. What began long ago in the Old Country repeated itself a generation after: the solitary Jewish mother grieving on foreign shores, became the Yiddishe Momme sitting alone with her memories. The Jewish-American mother was transformed into a stranger in a strange land. While her child could “walk a million miles/ For one of her smiles,” she had nowhere to go.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in Neal Gabler, *An Empire Of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1988), p. 7.
2. *The Jazz Singer*, ed. Robert L. Carringer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), p.11.
3. Samson Raphaelson, *The Jazz Singer* (New York: Brentano's, 1925), p.10.
4. Carringer, *The Jazz Singer*, p. 144.
5. Michael Rogin, "Blackface, White Noise: The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice," *Critical Inquiry*, 18 ( Spring, 1992), pp. 434,440.
6. The translation is by Mark Slobin in his *Tenement Songs: The Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), p. 204.
7. Quoted in Herbert H. Goldman, *Jolson: The Legend Comes to Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 301.
8. Raphaelson, p. 10.
9. Raphaelson, p. 10
10. Gabler, p. 145.

### Correction

In the book review by Alan J.Yuter of two books by David Novak (JUDAISM, Summer 1994), the phrase "a sense of situatedness in compromised Halakhic commitment" on page 324 should read "uncompromised Halakhic commitment."

We regret the error.

Articles

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
COHEN, JEFFREY M.	The Bereshit Song	220
ELAZAR, DANIEL J.	Jacob and Esau and the Emergence of the Jewish People	294
EPSTEIN, LAWRENCE J.	Why the Jewish People Should Welcome Converts	302
FELDMAN, LOUIS H.	Hellenism and Hebraism Reconsidered	115
FELSTINER, JOHN	Translation as Reversion: Paul Celan's Jerusalem Songs	419
GALCHINSKY, MICHAEL	Glimpsing Golus in the Golden Land: Jews and Multiculturalism in America	360
JOSPE, RAPHAEL	The Concept of the Chosen People: An Interpretation	127
KAHN, PAUL	An Analysis of the <i>Book of Jonah</i>	87
KAPLAN, LAWRENCE	The Love of God in Maimonides and Rav Kook	227
KATZ, NATHAN	Contacts Between Jewish and Indo-Tibetan Civilizations Through the Ages	46
LIBO, KENNETH	Everyman's Intellectual: Remembering Irving Howe	190
MASLIYAH, SADOK	The Bene Israel and the Baghdadis: Two Indian Jewish Communities in Conflict	279
MILLEN, ROCHELLE L.	Birkhat Ha-Gomel: Cultural Context and Halakhic Practice	270
NEUFELD, ERNEST	The Sins of the Census	196
PERKINS, CARL M.	The Evening <i>Shema</i> : A Study in Rabbinic Consolation	27
PICKER, JOHN	Shylock and the Struggle for Closure	173
RACKMAN, JOSEPH	Was Isaac Deceived?	37
REGENSTEINER, HENRY	Moses in the Light of Schiller	61
ROSENBLUM, NOAH H.	Rationales for the Omission of Eschatology in the Bible	149
RUBENSTEIN, JEFFREY L.	The Symbolism of the Sukka	371
SANUA, VICTOR D.	The Vanished World of Egyptian Jewry	212

SAPOSNIK, IRV	Jolson, The Jazz Singer and the Jewish Mother: or How My Yiddisha Momme Became My Mammy	432
SCHORSCH, ISMAR	Revisiting My Father's Synagogue	205
SCHWARTZ, HOWARD	The Quest for the Lost Princess: Transition and Change in Jewish Lore	240
SCOLNIC, BENJAMIN EDIDIN	David's Final Testament: Morality or Expediency?	19
SHERMAN, JOSEPH	Holding Fast to Integrity: Shalom Rabinovich, Sholem Aleichem and Tevye the Dairyman	6
SINCLAIR, CLIVE	The Jews are My Tahiti: R. B. Kitaj and the Subject of His Paintings: An Interview with Commentary	388
STONE, IRA F.	Worship and Redemption: Recovering Our Spiritual Vocabulary	66
WHITFIELD, STEPHEN J.	An Anatomy of Black Anti-Semitism	341
YANOW, DOVRA	Sarah's Silence: A Newly Discovered Commentary on Genesis 22 by Rashi's Sister	398
YEHUDA, ZVI A.	The Ritual and the Concept of <i>Havdalah</i>	78
YOUNG, JAMES E.	Germany's Vanishing Holocaust Monuments	412
ZIVOTOFSKY, ARI Z.	The Leadership Qualities of Moses	258
ZUCKER, DAVID J.	Malamud as Modern Midrash	159

## Reviews

<i>Reviewer</i>	<i>Book and Author</i>	<i>Page</i>
BRODSKY, GARRY M.	Act and Action in the Nazi Genocide by Berel Lang	313
GREENSTEIN, EDWARD L.	A Mind to Savage Judaism Review-Essay on The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz	101

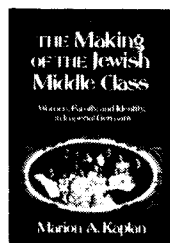
HIMMELFARB, MARTHA	Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World by Louis H. Feldman	328
SAPERSTEIN, MARC	Between Worlds: The Life and Thought of Rabbi David ben Judah Messer Leon by Hava Tirosh-Rothschild	110
YUTER, ALAN J.	The Theology of Nahmanides Systematically Presented by David Novak and Jewish Social Ethics by David Novak	322

## VERSE

FRANK, BERNHARD	Elegy for My Father's Generation	369
SINGER, SARAH	Lilith	100
SMITH, LEORA	Ma Oz?	409
	Mother Tongue	410
	The Cycle of Names	411

# OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

**New in paperback!**  
**Winner of the**  
**National Jewish**  
**Book Award for**  
**Jewish History**  
**The Making**  
**of the Jewish**  
**Middle Class**



**Women, Family, and Identity in**  
**Imperial Germany**  
**MARION KAPLAN**

*City University of New York*

"A pathbreaking contribution....Dramatically reshapes the way we understand the German-Jewish past."—*American Historical Review*.  
 "Kaplan reveals the structural realities and emotional significance of Jewish class and ethnicity in Germany."—*Interdisciplinary History*.

(*Studies in Jewish History*)

1991 (paper 1994) 368 pp.;

paper \$15.95 cloth \$45.00

**Model Mothers**  
**Jewish Mothers and Maternity**  
**Provision in East London,**  
**1870-1939**

**LARA V. MARKS**, *University of London*

Lara Marks assesses the extent to which the stereotype of Jewish mothers reflected the reality of their experience in East London between 1870 and 1939.

(*Oxford Historical Monographs*)

1994 344 pp.; \$53.00

**Studies in**  
**Contemporary Jewry**  
**Volume IX: Modern Jews and**  
**Their Musical Agendas**

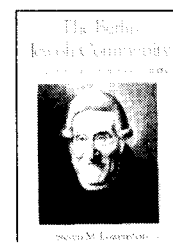
Edited by **EZRA MENDELSON**

*Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

This volume examines music's place in the process of Jewish assimilation into the modern European bourgeoisie and the role assigned to music in forging a new Jewish Israeli national identity, in maintaining a separate Sephardic identity, and in preserving a traditional Jewish life.

1994 400 pp.; \$45.00

**The Berlin**  
**Jewish**  
**Community**  
**Enlightenment,**  
**Family and**  
**Crisis, 1770-1830**  
**STEVEN M.**  
**LOWENSTEIN**



*University of Judaism, Los Angeles*

The Berlin Jewish community was both the pioneer in intellectual modernization and the first to experience a crisis of modernity. This original and imaginative book connects intellectual and political transformation with the social structures and daily activities of the Jewish community.

(*Studies in Jewish History*)

1994 320 pp.; \$49.95

**Israel's Border Wars,**  
**1949-1956**

**Arab Infiltration, Israeli**  
**Retaliation, and the Countdown**  
**to the Suez War**

**BENNY MORRIS**

*Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

"No one henceforth will be able to write on this period without reference to this basic study....Told with high regard for sources, in a smoothly written narrative that leaves the reader with a sense for how deep the antagonism between Arabs and Israelis really is."—*Foreign Affairs*.

1994 472 pp.; \$39.95

**1948 and After**  
**Israel and the Palestinians**

**BENNY MORRIS**

*Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

"For scholars interested in the Palestine of this period, this book should be considered must reading."—*American Historical Review*. "Benny Morris continues to enrich the field of knowledge encompassing Israel's violent origins."—*Political Studies*.

1991 (paper 1994) 384 pp.;

paper \$23.00 cloth \$69.00

*Prices are subject to change and apply only in the U.S. To order by phone using major credit cards, please call 1-800-451-7556.*

**200 MADISON AVENUE • NEW YORK, NY 10016**



## OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

*Now in a new edition!*

### **The Jew in the Modern World**

#### **A Documentary History**

##### **Second Edition**

Edited by PAUL MENDES-FLOHR, *Hebrew University, Jerusalem*, and JEHUDA REINHARZ, *Brandeis University*

The second edition of *The Jew in the Modern World* is an expanded and highly diverse collection of primary materials that trace the Jewish experience in the modern period and illustrate the transformation of Jewish religion, culture, and identity from the 17th and 18th centuries to 1948. Retaining from the first edition those documents that have proven most useful to the student of Jewish history, this volume adds hitherto unpublished and inaccessible sources concerning the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe, women in Jewish history, American Jewish life, the Holocaust, and Zionism and the nascent Jewish community in Palestine on the eve of the establishment of the State of Israel. The volume also includes some twenty useful tables detailing Jewish demographic trends. The volume is an important, if not invaluable, resource for any course on Jewish history, Zionism and Israel, the Holocaust, European and American history.

January 1995 704 pp.; 4 maps  
paper \$24.95 cloth \$49.95

*New!*

### **Contemporary Jewish Ethics and Morality**

#### **A Reader**

Edited by ELLIOT N. DORFF, *University of Judaism*, and LOUIS E. NEWMAN, *Carleton College*

Over the past decade much significant new work has appeared in the field of Jewish ethics. While much of this work has been devoted to issues in applied ethics, a number of important essays have explored central themes within the tradition, and clarified the theoretical foundations of Jewish ethics. This collection serves as an introduction to Jewish ethics by acquainting the reader with the distinctive methodological issues involved, and also offers a sampling of Jewish positions on contemporary moral problems.

January 1995 352 pp.  
paper \$16.95 cloth \$45.00

*New!*

### **Art from the Ashes**

#### **A Holocaust Anthology**

Edited by LAWRENCE LANGER, *Simmons College, Boston*

"Langer is the ideal person to edit this work. The author of four books and numerous articles on the subject, he is a leading scholar of Holocaust literature. He is a widely read, sober-minded scholar, who knows as much about this subject as anyone and has helped to set the terms and define the standards for its study."—Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *Director, Jewish Studies Program, Indiana University*

*Art from the Ashes* provides the most far-reaching collection of art, drama, poetry, and prose about the Holocaust ever presented in a single volume. Through the works of men and women, Jews and non-Jews, figures famous and unknown, those who were there and those separated from the ordeal by time and space, this anthology offers a vision of the human reality of the catastrophe. Each selection (except for self-contained excerpts from ghetto journals and diaries) appears here in its complete form. Langer also includes in their entirety a novel by Aharon Appelfeld, a novella by Pierre Gascar, and Joshua Sobol's controversial drama *Ghetto*. In addition, this volume features a visual essay in the form of reproductions of twenty works of art created in the Terezin concentration camp—which, as Langer notes, "further enrich and complicate our confrontation with the physical, moral, psychological, and emotional disruptions with which the Holocaust challenges us."

The stunning immensity of the Holocaust looms over the twentieth century, overshadowing all our efforts to make sense of it. Making a central contribution to courses in Holocaust literature and history, *Art from the Ashes* begins to pry open its mysteries, with outstanding selections collected by one of our finest commentators on the era.

December 1994 576 pp.; 20 illus.  
paper \$17.95 cloth \$29.95

*Prices and publication dates are subject to change. To request an examination copy, write on school letterhead giving full course information, including course name, level, expected enrollment, and your decision deadline, to: Oxford University Press  
ATTN: College Sales Coordinator*

200 MADISON AVENUE • NEW YORK, NY 10016

DISCOVER

# CONGRESS MONTHLY

And enhance your understanding of Jewish life

**CONGRESS MONTHLY**, the journal of the American Jewish Congress, is a leading source of informed opinion about significant developments in Jewish life. Now in its 61st year of publication, **CONGRESS MONTHLY** appears 6 times a year. It continues to treat and comment on virtually all of the issues of concern to the Jewish community—political, social, and cultural; Israel; U.S. and international affairs. Its distinguished contributors constitute a virtual “Who’s Who” of the Jewish intellectual community throughout the world.

-----  
*Mail Coupon to:*

**CONGRESS MONTHLY**  
15 East 84th Street  
New York, NY 10028

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose a check with your choice of:

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One year .....    | \$12.50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two years .....   | \$24.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Three years ..... | \$35.00 |

**U.S. currency only; outside U.S., \$2.00 extra per year.**



**Statement of Ownership,  
Management and  
Circulation**  
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1A. Title of Publication <b>JUDAISM</b>	1B. PUBLICATION NO. 0 0 2 2 - 5 7 6	2. Date of Filing <b>October 25, 1994</b>
3. Frequency of Issue <b>Quarterly</b>	3A. No. of Issues Published Annually <b>4</b>	3B. Annual Subscription Price <b>\$20.00</b>

4. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Street, City, County, State and ZIP+4 Code) (Not printers)

**American Jewish Congress, 15 East 84th St., New York, N.Y. 10028**

5. Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters of General Business Offices of the Publisher (Not printer)

**same as above**

6. Full Names and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (This item MUST NOT be blank)

Publisher (Name and Complete Mailing Address)

**American Jewish Congress, 15 East 84th St., New York, N.Y. 10028**

Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address)

**Acting Editor, Ruth B. Waxman**

**Judaism, 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028**

Managing Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address)

7. Owner (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual must be given. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, its name and address must be stated.) (Item must be completed.)

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
American Jewish Congress	15 East 84th St. New York, NY 10028

8. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities (If there are none, so state)

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
None	

9. For Completion by Nonprofit Organizations Authorized to Mail at Special Rates (DMM Section 424.12 only)

The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes (Check one)

☒ (1) Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months ☐ (2) Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement.)

10. Extent and Nature of Circulation (See instructions on reverse side)	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No. Copies (Net Press Run)	5770	5600
B. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	350	350
2. Mail Subscription (Paid and/or requested)	4970	4900
C. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 10B1 and 10B2)	5320	5250
D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier or Other Means Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies	50	50
E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D)	5370	5300
F. Copies Not Distributed		
1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing	150	150
2. Return from News Agents	250	150
G. TOTAL (Sum of E, F1 and 2—should equal net press run shown in A)	5770	5600

11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete

Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner

**Aliza Friedman, Business Manager**

# JUDAISM

There stood  
a splinter of fig on your lip,

there stood  
Jerusalem around us,

there stood  
the bright pine scent  
above the Danish ship we thanked,

I stood in you.

—Paul Celan, “Es Stand,”  
*translated by J. Felstiner*

MAG-88 BWR-18 NO FP5219-1/P11-5

JUDAISM - FAL 94



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED